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Fostering women's leadership

Gender-based resilience

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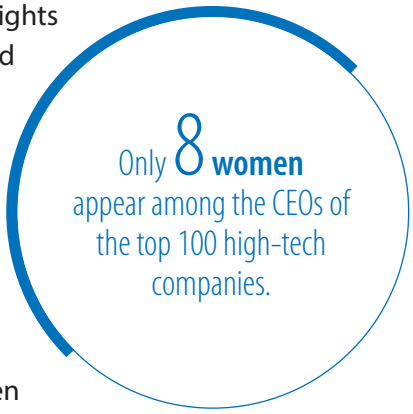
SHORT SUMMARY

No (leadership) share no gain (for societies and economies)!

Leveraging UNESCO's unique Gender-Based Resilience Framework, this report explores the role of women in leadership positions in both decision-making and high-tech, including in artificial intelligence-related innovations. It further highlights progress towards the G20 Brisbane Target, aimed to accelerate progress on gender equality by reducing the gender gap in labour market participation rates by 25% by 2025.



Women remain underrepresented in decision-making, holding only about 26% of seats in national parliaments worldwide on average. In the world of work, female labour participation continues to lag behind men's, at 47% for women against 72% for men on average. Despite progress by G20 members towards the Brisbane Target, a 2% average gap in absolute terms remained to be filled in 2022. In the high-tech world, women make up only 30% of AI professionals, and even less of leaders. Female inventors in AI account for about 37% of patents filed in 2022-23.

The lack of diversity and inclusiveness that these gaps represent continues to hinder progress, creativity, innovation, and wellbeing, undermining resilience and societies' ability to respond to crises. The evidence proposed calls on policymakers to develop and implement effective gender-transformative policies to eliminate these gaps.

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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

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Foreword

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Would a person be able to move away from a place if the strings of one of her shoes were trapped in a closed door? The answer we may all give is no, and we would perhaps add that, to be able to walk away, that person would need to open the door and tighten her laces first, before moving. Well, this is exactly what is happening to humanity, whose strings made of old and new constraints, social norms and prejudices, prevent women and girls – i.e. over half of humanity – from being fully empowered to advance. This, in turn, hinders societies' ability to progress, and to move away and recover from shocks.

Resilience, and the ability of societies to withstand and overcome challenges, entails more than merely surviving crises. It requires having the individual and collective ability to adapt, change, redress and thrive. Yet, still today, women are not given equal chances when it comes to contributing to, or benefitting from, a wide range of opportunities, including in decision-making. Built leveraging the whole spectrum of social and human sciences, UNESCO's **Gender-Based Resilience Framework** underscores the centrality of women's empowerment as a necessary condition of resilience, and tracks progress – or lack thereof – based on robust empirical evidence.

This year the report focuses on decision-making, both in policy or technology, and on women having the possibility to be at the helm; on innovativeness and on women's opportunities to contribute to building the future we collectively want; and on women's labour market participation, as resilience is intertwined with independence, understood also as financial independence. The findings are clear.

Despite progress observed in recent years, women continue to be underrepresented in top decision-making roles worldwide. In 1995, women held about 10% of parliamentary seats in the world; now, they account for about 26% of parliamentarians. Gender quota systems greatly contributed to this result, and while this more than double figure mirrors progress, women remain below the 30% target set by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Women now hold 28% of ministerial positions, an increase of 8 percentage points since 2014, but still not enough. Let me give you another example: this year, out of the 27 presidents elected, only 4 were women, and I am proud to say among them there is the President of my country, Mexico. While improvements emerge, it is paramount to continue fostering more inclusive policymaking, as evidence shows that when women lead, they bring unique perspectives and contribute to improve and enrich policymaking.

In the labour market, in 2014, G20 countries reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality by agreeing on the Brisbane Target, aiming to reduce by 25% the

gender gap in the labour market by 2025. This was a hallmark outcome for the G20, which was looking for new sources of inclusive growth. I am proud to say that, together with the other Sherpas, we managed to provide the evidence that let to leaders recognising that increasing women's participation in the labour market was not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. This agreement opened the door for numerous gender-focused outcomes adopted since then, both at the G20 and G7, further strengthening the growing global consensus that women's participation in the labour market benefits the welfare and wellbeing of both economies and societies. While figures show that, on average, G20 countries managed to meet the Brisbane Target, progress remain uneven and at times partial.

In G20 countries, women remain 1.5 times more likely to hold low-paying jobs than men, 82% more likely to work part-time, and earn on average 14% less. When it comes to high-tech companies, in the top 100 worldwide we only find 8 women at the helm. In the top seven high-tech companies (Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia, and Tesla), women represent only 33% of the workforce and only 25% of technical roles. Also, data about women participation in artificial intelligence-related innovations, as proxied by patents, show that women accounted for about 37% of them – quite far from gender equality, although an improvement compared with the past. These gender gaps hinder progress, creativity and innovation, undermining individuals' and societies' resilience and well-being. In the case of artificial intelligence, there is an urgent need to avoid the generation, reproduction and amplification of gender stereotypes, in and through the digital world. This is what that we are pursuing through our UNESCO Women for Ethical AI platform, leveraging the gender chapter of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence - the only global normative standard that exists and that is applicable to all 194 UNESCO Member States.

This report calls for urgent action from governments, businesses, and communities. It is now the time to continue improving and to step up engagement and delivery, as the evidence is clear: empowering women translates into greater welfare and wellbeing for all, and ultimately leads to more inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies. Together and more equal we are stronger.

Acknowledgements

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All errors remain our own.

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Executive summary

Building on last year's findings, this second Gender-Based Resilience report continues to shed light on the way individuals of different gender respond to shocks and structural changes, and how this, in turn, contributes to foster - or otherwise hinder - societal resilience (UNESCO, 2023a). The focus of this year is on the participation and role of women and, more generally, of people of different gender, in policy- and decision-making, in the labour market, and in the high-tech sector, including artificial intelligence (AI).

The analysis leverages a wide array of data, indicators and sources – including purposely collected first-hand data -, to maximise coverage across countries and over time, shed light on possible trends, and thus assess progress or lack thereof.

1. Monitoring Framework conditions

UNESCO's Gender-Based Resilience Framework is articulated over three main layers, namely (i) fundamental rights, (ii) core domains and (iii) contextual domains.

(i). Fundamental rights, encompass from the right to live free of violence and discrimination to the right to education.

(ii) Core domains refer to access to health, education, work, and political and civic engagement, inter alia.

(iii) Contextual domains include representation, values, perception and institutions, which interact with the aforementioned core domains.

While progress has been made towards reducing violence against women and girls, it remains insufficient, with underreporting contributing to mask the true scale of abuse.

- Between 2020 and 2023, the proportion of women experiencing psychological and physical violence at least once in life (among women aged 15-49) dropped from 36.7% to 23%. Many cases likely go unreported due to taboos and experiences of secondary victimization in reporting and trial processes.
- Global data on sexual violence against women and girls show rates between 6% in 2019 and 10% in 2018, with 6.7% reported in 2023. This minimal decline calls for strengthened policy efforts for zero-tolerance against sexual violence, and adequate budgets and training for their implementation.

Higher investment in education contribute to reduce dropout rates and may help addresses youth unemployment and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates.

- Over the past 20 years, 22% of young girls and 14% of young boys have been NEET. Girls are 1.6 times more likely to be NEET than boys.
- Since 2010, countries have invested an average of 1.5% of GDP in secondary education, with a slight decline to 1.4% in 2018-2019.
- Women's NEET rates have dropped to 16.75% and men's to 12% in 2023.
- Higher government spending on secondary education can help reduce NEET rates: a 1% increase in education spending relate to reduced female NEET rates of 6.9%.
- NEET rates are linked to poverty, especially in the case of young women (correlation coefficient: 0.53, versus 0.34 for young men).
- Some countries with significant increases in education spending over the last years still experience high dropout rates, particularly among boys. This points to the need for further investigation.

The more the time spent on unpaid care work, the lower the participation of women in the labour market. This calls for policies aiming to redistribute and recognise unpaid work.

- For every additional hour spent on unpaid care work, women's employment rate decreases by 5.9%, a worsening trend from the previous estimate of 4.4%.
- In countries where women spend more than two extra hours on unpaid care work compared to men, female employment rates are halved, at around 50%. This decline becomes even more pronounced when the gap increases to four hours, with female employment dropping to just 30%.
- Each additional hour of unpaid care and domestic work is associated with a 4% decrease in the share of firms owned by women, and, consequently, in women's economic opportunities.

2. Women in decision-making

Important progress has been made during the last 30 years in relation to the UN Beijing Conference's target of having 30% women in decision-making, albeit difference across countries and regions remain.

- In 1995, women held about 10% of parliamentary seats; by 2024, this share had more than doubled, to an average of about 26% across UNESCO regions.
- 35% of countries have reached the critical mass target of 30% of women's representation in national parliaments, with 79% of these countries having adopted gender quota systems.

Gaps remain between formal and actual representation, across regions and age cohorts.

- As of 2023, more than half of countries (54%) had more than 25% of women in their legislative bodies.
- Europe and North America lead with an average of 33.4%, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa have also shown strong growth, with countries like Cuba, Rwanda, the UAE reaching over 50% representation.
- While women's representation among young Members of Parliament (MPs) increased by 11 percentage points by 2021, significant age-related disparities persist: Young women under 30 have consistently made up less than 1% of MPs over the past 15 years.

The unprecedented number of elections held across the world in 2024 offered an opportunity to increase gender diversity in policy making, but expectations were not met.

- In 2024, only 4 women were elected as presidents out of 27 countries holding presidential elections. In 16 of these countries, there were no women candidates at all.
- In national parliamentary elections, only 11 out of 27 countries achieved the critical threshold of 30% female representation.

Analysis shows that countries with higher levels of women's political empowerment also tend to have stronger democratic systems and adherence to the rule of law.

- An increase in women's political empowerment is associated with a 52% higher probability of having an electoral democracy.
- An increase in women's empowerment is linked to a 57% improvement in adherence to the rule of law.
- Women empowerment is related to a 46.8% reduction in corruption levels.

3. Women in the labour market

While most G20 countries have met or are close to meet the G20 Brisbane Target, challenges remain in relation to informality, part-time, and low(er) wages, among others, in addition to unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, which overburden women.

- The Brisbane target of a 25% reduction in the gender pay gap has been reached on average across G20 countries for which data are available.
- Australia, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Northern Ireland have met and even surpassed the Brisbane target.
- In G20 countries, women's employment rates remain 28% lower than those of men and women are 82% more likely than men to be employed part-time.

- Women are 1.5 times more likely than men to perform low-paying jobs and the sectors in which women are overrepresented often tend to be those in which wages are lower.
- In 2023, women earned on average 14% less than men, with greater difference in the pay gap emerging in relation to top earners, where women earned 18.8% less than their male counterparts.

4. Women in technology and innovation

Women remain underrepresented in high-tech, including AI, in relation to both innovation and management, inequalities that, among others, may lead to the perpetuation of gender biases.

- Contrary to the stereotype that boys are better at mathematics, evidence shows that 15-year-old boys and girls tend to perform similarly in mathematics. This however does not translate into career choices. Women continue to account for less than 35% of graduates in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), fuelling a persistent gender gap in STEM fields.
- In the top seven high-tech companies (Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla), women represent 33% of the workforce and account for only one fourth (25%) of technical roles, based on info reported in their 2023 annual reports.
- In the top 100 tech companies, women account for a mere 8% of CEOs', 22% of executive boards', and 30% of boards of directors' positions. While women make up 37% of the workforce, they account for just 9% in high-tech roles, despite evidence showing that diverse leadership leads to better performance.
- Only 24 out of 138 countries have government frameworks addressing gender inequalities in and through AI.
- Innovation continues to be male dominated, with women accounting for only about 37% of all the patents filed in 2022-23 in relation to AI.

Introduction

As societies increasingly grapple with the compounding effects of technological disruptions, climate change, and socio-economic inequalities, the concept of resilience has gained renewed urgency. Central to building resilience is the imperative to ensure that all voices, particularly those of women, are adequately represented in decision-making processes across all spheres (Bawany, 2020; Verma, 2019). Research consistently demonstrates that when women are empowered, the resulting societal benefits extend beyond individual well-being, significantly contributing to the stability and adaptability of communities. Empowered women play essential roles in decision-making processes, fostering inclusive governance and ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented in policy formulation. This inclusivity not only leads to more equitable outcomes but also strengthens a country's ability to respond effectively to economic, social, and environmental challenges. Consequently, understanding the dynamics of women's empowerment is crucial for developing strategies that enhance national and global resilience.

The present report leverages UNESCO's unique Gender-Based Resilience Framework, and builds on last year's findings to look at women's empowerment through the lens of leadership, specifically in policymaking and the high-tech sector. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of women's participation in leadership roles, as this can influence decision-making processes and drive innovations in critical fields shaping our future. Also, with the G20 Brisbane Target approaching – a G20 target aiming to reduce the gender gap in labour market participation rates by 25% by 2025 -, it is imperative to assess the current levels of women's participation in the labour market and their roles. Finally, the report investigates the role of women in artificial intelligence (AI)-related innovation, emphasizing the importance of gender diversity in shaping technologies that impact society. By exploring these dimensions, the report seeks to provide a comprehensive view of how women's leadership can transform decision- and policy-making, labour market dynamics and technological advancements, ultimately contributing to societal resilience.

Results shows that progress towards achieving the UN Beijing Conference goal of 30% female representation in decision-making roles has been notable over the past 30 years. In 1995, women occupied about 10% of parliamentary seats, and this figure rose to around 26% by 2024. Presently, 35% of nations have attained the critical mass of 30% women in national parliaments, with a majority implementing gender quota systems. Despite advancements, significant gaps persist between formal and real representation though. By 2023, 54% of countries featured over 25% women in legislative roles, with Europe and North America leading (33.4%) and Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa showing notable improvement. However, the 2024 elections, involving over 4.1 billion voters and offering a unique opportunity to reshape the global political landscape (The Economist, 2024) yielded disappointing results. Only four female presidents among 27 countries were elected and only 11 countries achieved 30% female representation in parliamentary elections. Increasing the presence of women in high-level policy making would benefit societies and democracies. The analysis we perform shows that greater female political empowerment correlates with stronger democratic systems, enhanced adherence to the rule of law, and decreased corruption levels. Without intentional efforts to increase the diversity of political leadership, the potential for achieving truly inclusive governance remains limited.

When it comes to work, figures show that despite advancements, challenges persist for women. The Brisbane target of a 25% reduction in the labour market participation's gap of women has been met on average across G20 countries for which data are available. Notably, Australia, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom have surpassed this target. Despite progress, however, women's employment rates remain 28% lower than men's, with women being 82% more likely to work part-time. Additionally, women are 1.5 times

more likely than men to hold low-paying jobs, and they earn, on average, 14% less than men having similar qualifications or jobs, with top earners experiencing an 18.8% disparity. The overall picture that emerges is one whereby, notwithstanding the differences that emerge across countries and in relation to the specific labour market-related indicators considered, setting targets and leveraging multilateral approaches to such complex endeavours appear effective in advancing the gender agenda.

When it comes to the role of women in high-tech fields, including AI, women remain underrepresented, with less than 35% of STEM graduates being female, fact that contributes to perpetuating gender biases. The report further shows that, in the top seven tech companies worldwide, women make up 33% of the workforce, yet occupy only 25% of technical roles. Among the top 100 tech firms by market capitalization, female representation is dismally low, with 8% as CEOs and 22% on executive boards. Also, innovation-wise, the presence of women remains insufficient, as they accounted for just 37% of inventors in AI patents published in 2022-23. Finally, when it comes to AI governance frameworks, gender and gender-related aspects are explicitly considered or addressed in only 24 out of 138 countries.

In what follows, the report first proposes a brief overview of UNESCO's gender-based resilience framework and tracks change related to violence against women; expenditure in education and school dropout; youth not in education, employment or training (NEET); and unpaid work. Chapter 2 focuses on women in policy and decision making. It first frames the issue to then look at the status quo, the challenges and some regional trends over time. It then investigates more in depth some of the key outcomes of the elections held in 2024, and looks at parliamentary and presidential elections from a gender perspective. Finally, it proposes an analysis of the relationship between women's empowerment in policy making and democratic outcomes. Chapter 3 focuses on women in the labour market by shedding light on the objective and key indicators related to the G20 Brisbane Target and investigating the extent to which targets have been met. In addition, it looks at job quality-related indicators, including labour market security and working conditions. Chapter 4 conversely focuses on women in innovation and the digital world, including AI. It highlights the presence and role that women have in the high-tech world and their contribution to innovation and to shaping the technologies of the future.

The conclusions of the analysis follow, enriched by a number of implications for policy.

As the world stands at a crossroads, the imperative to adopt inclusive policies that prioritise gender inclusion and equity is clear. The resilience of our societies depends on ensuring that women are not merely participants but leaders in shaping the future. This report thus serves as a guide for action, calling on decision-makers and stakeholders to embrace gender-transformative policies that will lay the foundation for a more inclusive and resilient world.

Chapter 1.

The Gender-Based Resilience Framework: A brief overview

In 2023, UNESCO introduced the Gender-Based Resilience Framework. This framework aims to shed light on the way individuals of different gender respond to shocks and structural changes, and how this, in turn, contributes to foster (or otherwise hinder) societal resilience (UNESCO, 2023a). Gender roles and societal expectations significantly influence decisions related to education, employment, and access to healthcare, among others. Expectations and stereotypes based on gender continue to shape economic opportunities, and participation in civic and political life, often resulting in persistent forms of discrimination.

For example, the career aspirations of young people are often constrained by stereotypes, such as the belief that men excel in quantitative disciplines and should serve as primary breadwinners, whereas women are deemed better suited to the humanities or professions oriented towards caregiving. Such stereotypes can reinforce inequalities and contribute to the systematic disempowerment of women and girls and the devaluation of the so called "care economy", which, despite contributing to societal well-being, is characterised by low pay, if any, and poor working conditions (e.g. Folbre, 2006; Grantham et al., 2021; Heggeness, 2023).

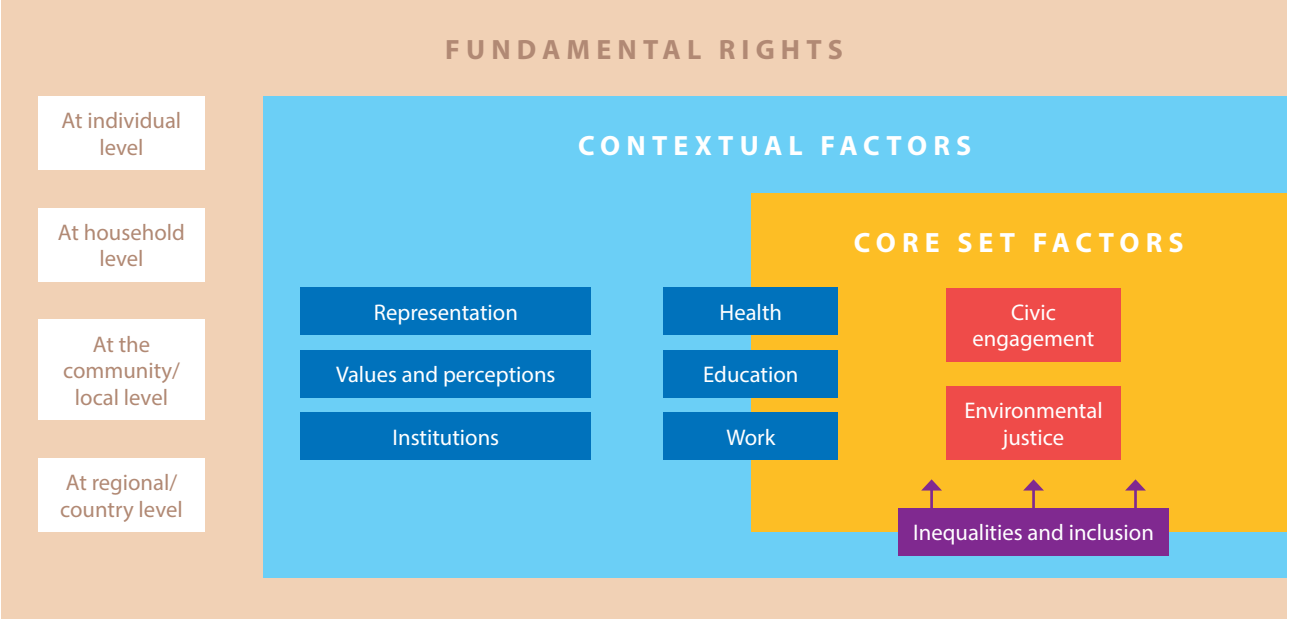
Gender-related norms, beliefs and stereotypes tend to translate into important imbalances in education and labour markets alike, contributing to making societies less inclusive, innovative and resilient. Women make up less than 30% of researchers globally and 20% of university professors (UNESCO, 2022). On average, they perform unpaid care work 2.3 times more than men and earn 14% less than their male counterparts having the same roles and responsibilities (UNESCO, 2023a). When it comes to transformative technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), only 22% of AI professionals are women, and women contribute only about 14% of peer-reviewed AI publications (World Economic Forum, 2024).

The vulnerabilities that women face throughout their careers have long-term repercussions on their pension entitlements, further exacerbating gender disparities in retirement security. Currently, women aged 65 and above receive 26% less than men from the pension system (UNESCO, 2023a). The greater vulnerability to which women are systematically exposed undermines not only their individual resilience but also that of whole communities. Evidence shows that women's empowerment relates positively to the ability of societies to thrive and be resilient (see, e.g. Aziz et al., 2022; Duflo, 2012; UNESCO, 2023a). Especially in times of crisis, the involvement of all individuals is essential in responding to both personal and community-level shocks. Yet, gender-based discrimination weakens this collective response.

UNESCO's Gender-Based Resilience Framework advocates for policies and interventions that empower women and gender-diverse individuals. Institutions have the power to reduce gender-based vulnerabilities by ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources for all, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, among other factors. This includes ensuring equal access to decision-making, sexual and reproductive healthcare, combatting all forms of violence and discrimination, and safeguarding fundamental rights such as education, employment, justice, and participation in democratic processes.

Figure 1 exemplifies the approach pursued in the present report to understanding the drivers and conditions required for the empowerment of women and gender-diverse individuals, and the relationships that exist between empowerment and resilience, at both individual and collective levels.

Figure 1: Measurement approach



Source: UNESCO, 2023.

The core set of factors includes the relationships between women's and girls' access to, and empowerment in, education, health, work, political and civic engagement, and resilience. Contextual factors interact with core factors to either mitigate, exacerbate or improve individuals' resilience.

In what follows, we propose an update of some of the key indicators and statistics first proposed in the UNESCO 2023 gender-based resilience report, complement this information and identify possible trends and changes. As mentioned in the introduction, the second part of this report conversely focus on three key issues: women's participation and leadership in decision-making, in both policy and high-tech business; their participation in the labour market; and their contribution to innovation, especially AI. As technologies like AI continue to transform economies and societies, it is imperative to examine the extent to which women take part in shaping them and, in turn, how technologies may affect gender equality, and whether they can serve as catalysts to close the gender gap, or rather exacerbate existing inequalities.

Tracking trends: Monitoring change

Following the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1, we first provide evidence about fundamental rights, by monitoring violence against women and how gender stereotypes relate to violence.

Violence against women

Violence against women and girls, which is a form of gender-based violence, may entail several forms of physical, sexual, psychological, and/or economic violence such as: intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic violence, harassment, rape, human trafficking and exploitation, conflict-related violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, virginity testing, dowry violence, femicide, as well as technology-facilitated violence online such as cyberbullying, stalking, non-consensual sexting, doxing, or deepfakes, among others[1] (UNWOMEN, 2024).

On average, among the countries for which data are available since 2015, evidence shows that instances of violence against women have been varying importantly over the past nine years, and that physical and emotional violence are closely intertwined. Following a peak in 2020, when 36.7% and 33.5% of women, respectively, reported having experienced these types of violence during their lifetime, figures drop to approximately 23% in both categories in 2023 (Figure 2).

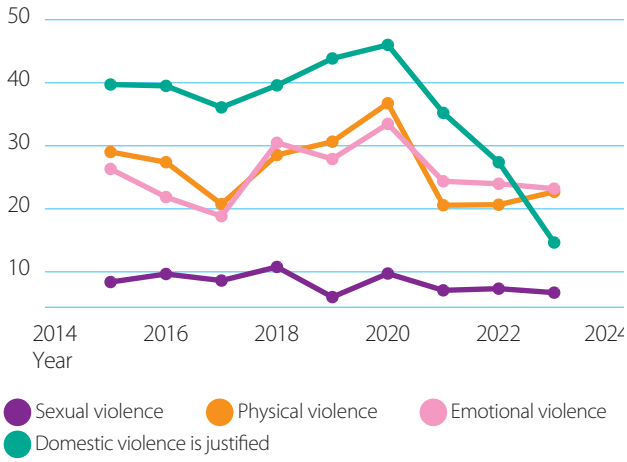
1 https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/faqs-types-of-violence-against-women-and-girls

When it comes to sexual violence, global data available from 2015 onwards show percentages ranging between 6% in 2019 to 10% in 2018, with 6.7% reported in 2023. This data, derived from the Demographic and Health Surveys conducted internationally, point to a very likely underestimation of violence against women, highlighting the gravity of what remains a largely hidden issue, of which we merely observe the tip of the iceberg. Violence against women, which is a phenomenon that affects one in three women globally, on average (UNWOMEN and WHO, 2018), constitutes a violation of women's human rights, as recognized by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (CEDAW, 1979). It further represents a major barrier to personal fulfilment, which has both immediate and long-term physical and psychological consequences for women, their children, and the very resilience of societies.

Gender-based violence and violence against women are rooted in the unequal power relations that exist among women, men and gender-diverse individuals. It gets perpetuated through entrenched gender stereotypes, and exacerbated in times of crises (e.g. in the COVID-19 waves). For example, as illustrated in Figure 2, between 2015 to 2020, two out of five women believed that domestic violence could be justified under certain circumstances. This stereotype, which legitimates the use of physical violence if a person fails to conform to patriarchal norms and behaviours[2], is seemingly being dismantled gradually. The most recent figures we have, i.e. for the 2023, reveal that 14.6% of women still continue to believe domestic violence can be justified, although this figure is nearly three times lower than the one observed in 2020.

While the above evidence points to possible greater awareness about women's rights, this nevertheless contrasts with overall statistics about the different types of violence perpetrated against women. Between 2015 and 2023, almost nothing changed. We do not observe diminishing trends but rather see peaks emerge at times of crises (i.e. 2018-2021) among periods when the situation barely changes. This likely mirrors how entrenched aggressive behaviours against women are and calls for the need to engage men in the fight against violence against women and to foster positive masculinities. The latter is the purpose of UNESCO's Transforming MEN'talities Programme[3], which aims to engage men and dismantle harmful masculinities and gender-based prejudices.

Figure 2: Forms of violence against women (%)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023.

Expenditure in education and school dropout

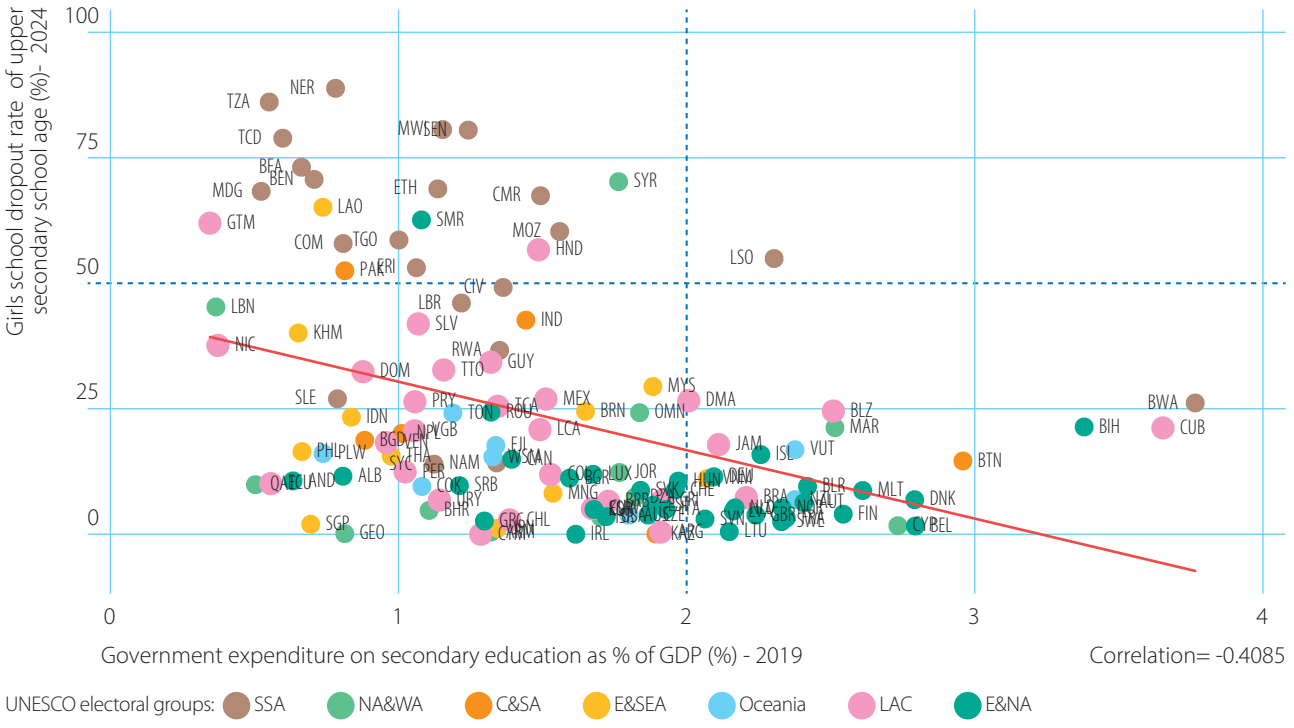
The eradication of violence against women is a collective responsibility that requires the active engagement of both individuals and communities. At the policy level, it is imperative to adopt gender transformative approaches that leverage education as a tool to raise awareness and empower women and gender-diverse individuals, and that encompass stringent and effectively enforced laws that hold perpetrators accountable.

Education remains a fundamental component of individuals' empowerment and a key asset to build and reinforce societal resilience to shocks and structural changes, and foster prosperity (UNESCO, 2023a). Education and training can improve individuals' lives by providing the skills, competences and knowledge needed in life and at work, enabling positive impacts that also benefit future generations. Through education and free, impartial research (UNESCO, 2017) humanity can be able to find solutions to some of the world's most pressing challenges, including climate change, widening inequalities or democratic backsliding. Education and individual and societal empowerment remain the most powerful and peaceful tools to reimagine and shape a more just and sustainable society grounded in reciprocal respect and peace (UNESCO, 2022a).

2 This indicator measures the percentage of women who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for any of the following five reasons: 1. When she argues with him, 2 when she burns the food, 3 when she goes out without telling him, 4 when she neglects the children, 5 when she refuses sex with him.

3 https://www.unesco.org/en/social-human-sciences/transforming-mentalities#:~:text=Transforming%20MEN'talities%20aims%20to...&text=Strengthen%20skills%20by%20engaging%20key,build%20individuals'%20social%20emotional%20skills.

Figure 3: Female school dropout and government expenditure on secondary education (%)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and World Bank data, 2024.

Note: School dropout rate is the number of females (males) of official upper secondary school age individuals who are not enrolled in upper secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the female (male) population of official upper secondary school age individuals. This indicator corresponds to SDG 4.1.4.

Government expenditure on secondary education, expressed as a percentage of GDP, includes expenditure funded by transfers from national and international sources to the government. It is computed by dividing the total government expenditure for the secondary level of education by the GDP and multiplied by 100.

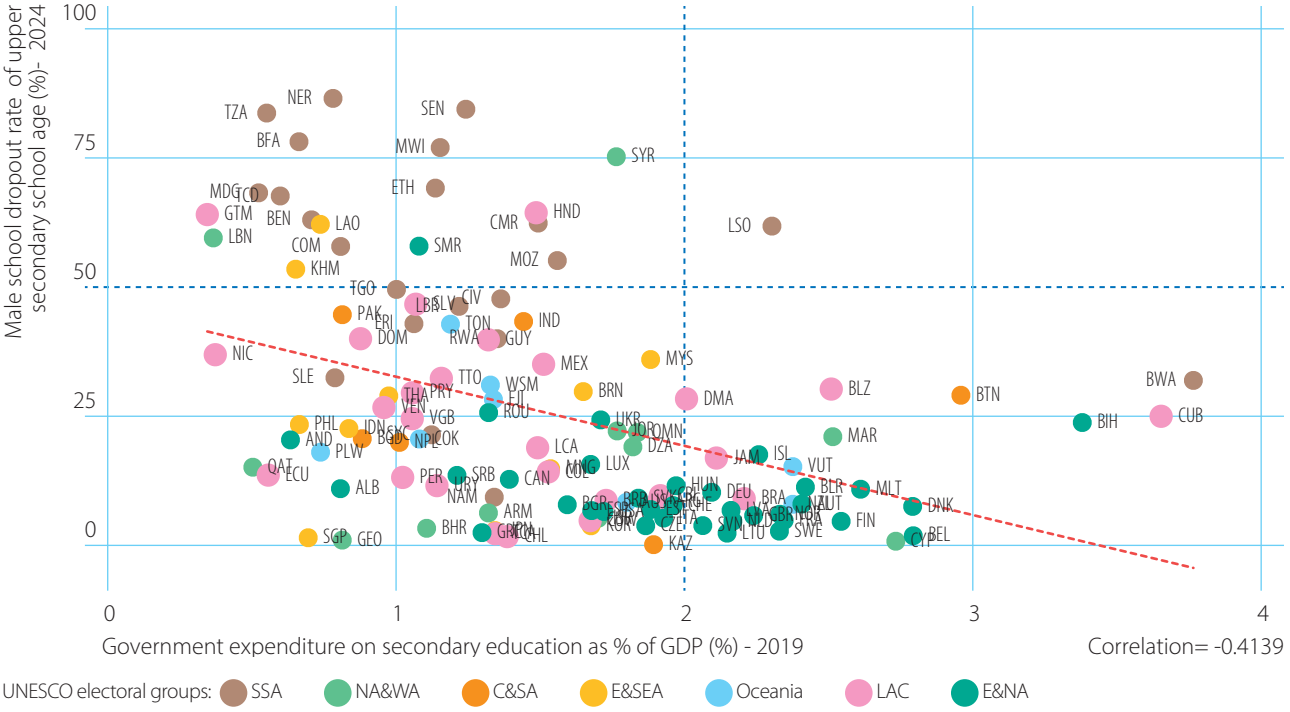
Education (including quality education) represents a fundamental right and should be a must have for all genders. However, data indicate that in 2023, 250 million children and youth aged 6 to 18 were out of school globally, of which 48% are girls (UNESCO, 2023a).

Governments play a pivotal role in making education accessible to all and in fostering gender-transformative resilience, also through providing the financial means for this to happen. On average, in countries for which data are available, an average 1.5% of GDP has been invested in secondary education since 2010, a share that declined to 1.4% between 2018 and 2019. More recent data, despite not being comparable with the ones for the 2018-2019 as they refer to a different group of countries, show investment of 1.65% in 2020 and 1.58% of GDP in 2021 in secondary education, pointing to a (slight) negative trend that, if confirmed, would be worrisome.

Figure 3 shows a significant and negative correlation between investment in secondary education in 2019 and girls' school dropout rates in 2024. Estimates suggest that an additional 1% of GDP allocated to education may relate to lower dropout rates by 13.6% for girls and 13.4% for boys, setting the basis for more resilient and brighter futures for millions of children.

While these findings indicate that government investment in education has a similarly positive effect on both genders, differences emerge over time. Between 2019-2020 and 2023-2024, the percentage of girls dropping out of school decreased by 3 percentage points, reaching 24% in the latter period. In contrast, boys' dropout rates declined less, by 0.6%, reaching 24.15%. These overall trends, however, hide important cross-country differences and varying regional patterns.

Figure 4: Male school dropout and Government expenditure on secondary education (%)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and World Bank data, 2024.

Note: School dropout rate is the number of females (males) of official upper secondary school age individuals who are not enrolled in upper secondary school, expressed as a percentage of the female (male) population of official upper secondary school age individuals. This indicator corresponds to SDG 4.1.4.

Government expenditure on secondary education, expressed as a percentage of GDP, includes expenditure funded by transfers from national and international sources to the government. It is computed by dividing the total government expenditure for the secondary level of education by the GDP and multiplied by 100.

In Europe and North America, for instance, countries typically allocate between 2% and 2.5% of their GDP to secondary education, and experience a school dropout rate below 10%, for both girls and boys. In Sub-Saharan Africa, dropout rates for both genders vary importantly against investment in education that generally range between 0.5% and 1.5% of GDP.

While the observed correlation between greater investment in education and lower school dropouts is significant and important, a number of exceptions emerge, which would deserve further investigation. For example, Botswana and Lesotho stand out in terms of investment in education, corresponding to 3.8% and 2.3% of GDP, respectively. Yet school dropout rates remain high, at about 30% in Botswana and 55% in Lesotho, with boys exhibiting higher dropout rates than girls. In other cases, we observe very high or very low dropout rates against investment in education that are relatively average. This may point to the fact that time and persistency are needed for education to shape dynamics for good and that other factors may need to be in place for structural change to occur. Additional research related to these patterns may help understand the causes leading to such high dropouts, vis-a-vis investment in education, to inform and guide policy.

Another pattern that emerges is that in the countries exhibiting the lowest dropout rates for girls, boys' dropouts are often very high. While this may reflect real differences in educational patterns, it may nevertheless simply represent a statistical feature, whereby big coefficients can be obtained when comparing numbers, one of which is very small. As an example, if we were to compare dropout rates of 0.2% and 2% it would be correct to say that the second is tenfold the first. However, both numbers remain very small and may hide non-significant differences.

Investing in youth is essential to enable a gender equal, inclusive, resilient future. Young people are those that will have to deal with the digital transformation throughout their lives and continue steering artificially intelligence for good as it evolves[4]. They will also have to continue coping - and perhaps increasingly so - with climate change, while striving for a just green transition (often called "the twin (green & digital) transition" (Diodato et al., 2023).

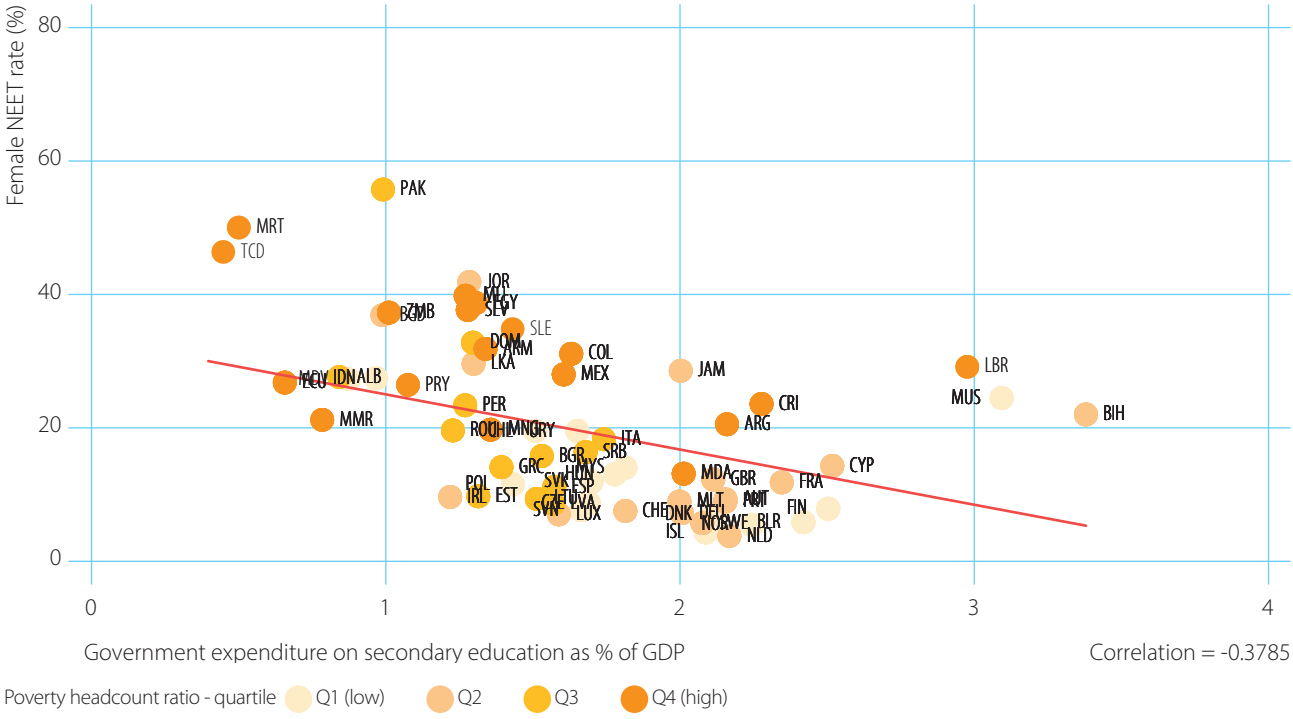
4 In line with the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, www.unesco.org/en/articles/recommendation-ethics-artificial-intelligence

Youth not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Being able to deal with change and remaining resilient in the face of shocks requires being endowed with the skills needed to live and thrive in the digital era and being included in society. This is seldom the case for people that are not in education, training or employment.

As Figure 5 and Figure 6 show, a negative correlation exists between government expenditures in secondary education as percentage of GDP and the proportion of youth that are not in education, employment or training (the so-called "NEET"). How can one expect young generations to be adequately prepared to face future challenges when, on average over the past 20 years, 22% of young girls and 14% of young boys aged 15 to 29 have not been in education, employment, or training?

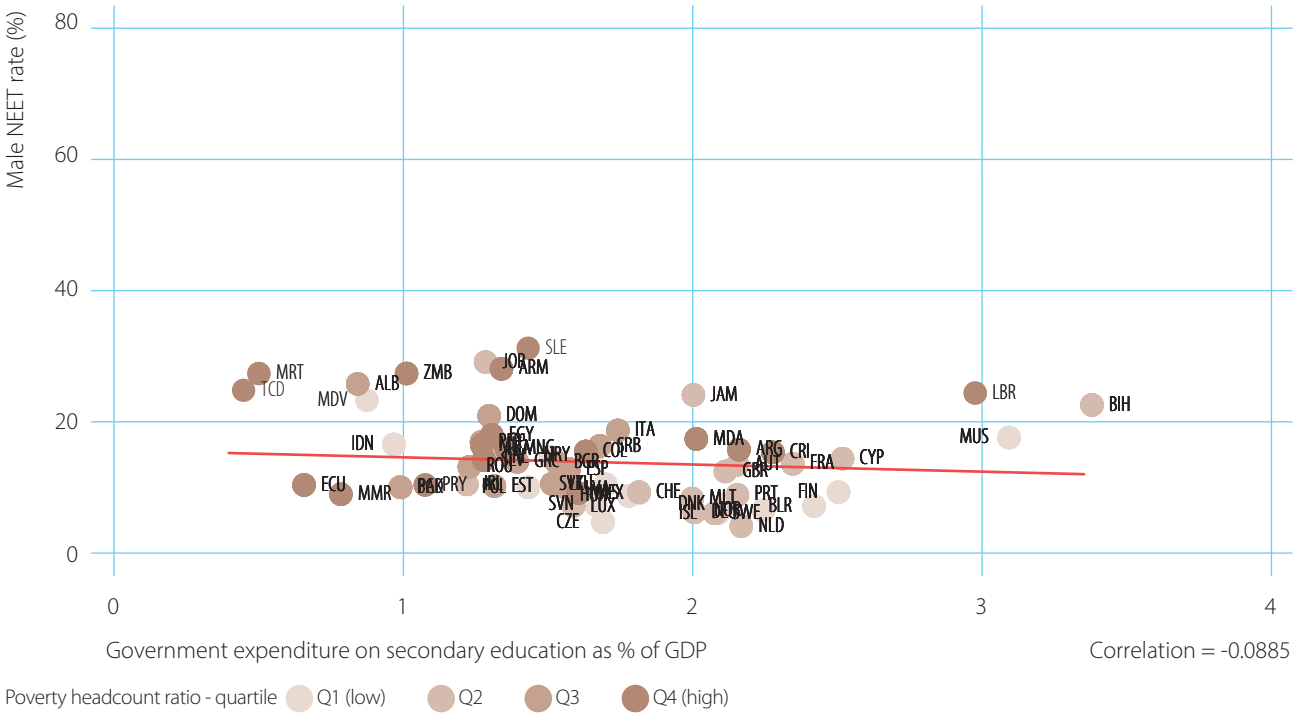
Figure 5: Association between female NEET rate, government investment on secondary education and poverty headcount



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2024. (Pooled data 2015-2024).

Note: The NEET indicator is the share of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) which is the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment, or training to the population of the corresponding age group (15-29). This indicator corresponds to SDG 8.6.1. Government expenditure on secondary education, expressed as a percentage of GDP, includes expenditure funded by transfers from national and international sources to the government. It is computed by dividing the total government expenditure for the secondary level of education by the GDP and multiplied by 100.

Figure 6: Association between male NEET rate, government investment on secondary education and poverty headcount



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2024. (Pooled data 2015-2024).

Note: The NEET indicator is the share of youth not in education, employment or training (NEET) which is the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment, or training to the population of the corresponding age group (15-29). This indicator corresponds to SDG 8.6.1. Government expenditure on secondary education, expressed as a percentage of GDP, includes expenditure funded by transfers from national and international sources to the government. It is computed by dividing the total government expenditure for the secondary level of education by the GDP and multiplied by 100.

Moreover, as can be seen comparing the two graphs, there is no significant association between male NEET rate and government expenditure on secondary education, while young women are seemingly affected by it. Since 2000, young girls have been 1.6 times more likely than young men to be NEET.

In most countries worldwide, a number of policies have been put in place to address the NEET condition, leading to lower rates of 3.3 percentage points for women on average, reaching 16.75% in 2023, and 2 percentage points for men (reaching 12%). Despite this general trend, in countries such as Guatemala, young women are 5 times more likely than young men to be NEET. In India young women are 3.7 times more likely than young men to be NEET, and in Mexico 2.8 times. These disparities could be partially related to issues such as youth pregnancy, which remains a significant factor leading to school dropouts among young women (Klepinger et al., 1995; Josephson, et al., 2018; Sobngwi-Tambekou, et al., 2022). As of 2019, adolescents aged 15–19 years in low- and middle-income countries accounted for an estimated 21 million pregnancies each year, of which approximately 50% were unintended and which resulted in an estimated 12 million births (Sully et al., 2020). The disruption in education that pregnancies can cause may contribute to exacerbate vulnerabilities and to constrain future employment and economic independence (UNESCO, 2023a; University of Pennsylvania and Masterson, 2021).

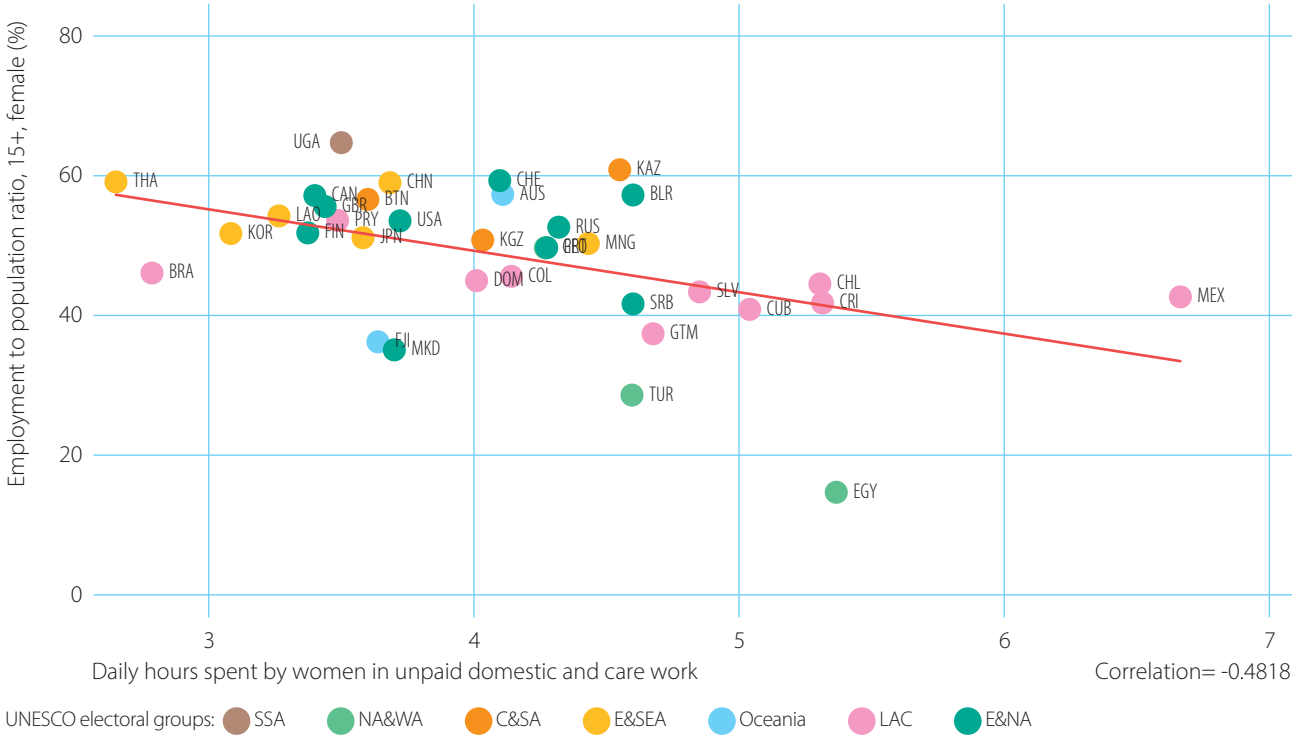
Among the policies that can play a pivotal role in addressing the NEET issue there is investment in education, including in vocational education and training (VET) as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Evidence indicates that quality VET and TVET programmes can help equip individuals with the practical skills demanded on the labour markets and can be particularly effective in reducing NEET rates (Bolli et al., 2021)policymakers around the world support vocational education and training (VET. Data from Figures 5 and 6 suggest that a 1% increase in GDP investment in education could correspond to a significantly lower female NEET rate by 6.9%, while the impact for boys is not statistically significant.

The analysis also highlights the relationship between NEET rates and poverty. In Figure 5 and 6, countries are denoted by their poverty headcount rates, with light blue indicating low poverty (first quartile), and dark blue representing high poverty (fourth quartile). Results show a strong correlation between higher NEET rates and poverty, which in addition is more pronounced for young women (correlation coefficient: 0.53) compared to young men (0.34).

Additionally, government investment in education shows a significant and negative correlation with female NEET rates (-0.37), which is weaker and not statistically significant for male NEET rates (-0.13). These findings emphasise the importance of investment in education, particularly where poverty is more widespread and disproportionately impacts young women. Expanding access to quality VET and TVET programmes and ensuring alignment with labour market needs is essential to reduce NEET rates and address socioeconomic inequalities.

Unpaid work

Figure 7: Paid versus unpaid work (%)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023. (Pooled data 2015-2022).

Note: Employment to population ratio is the proportion of women employed of age 15 and above over the female country's population. Employment is defined as persons of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit.

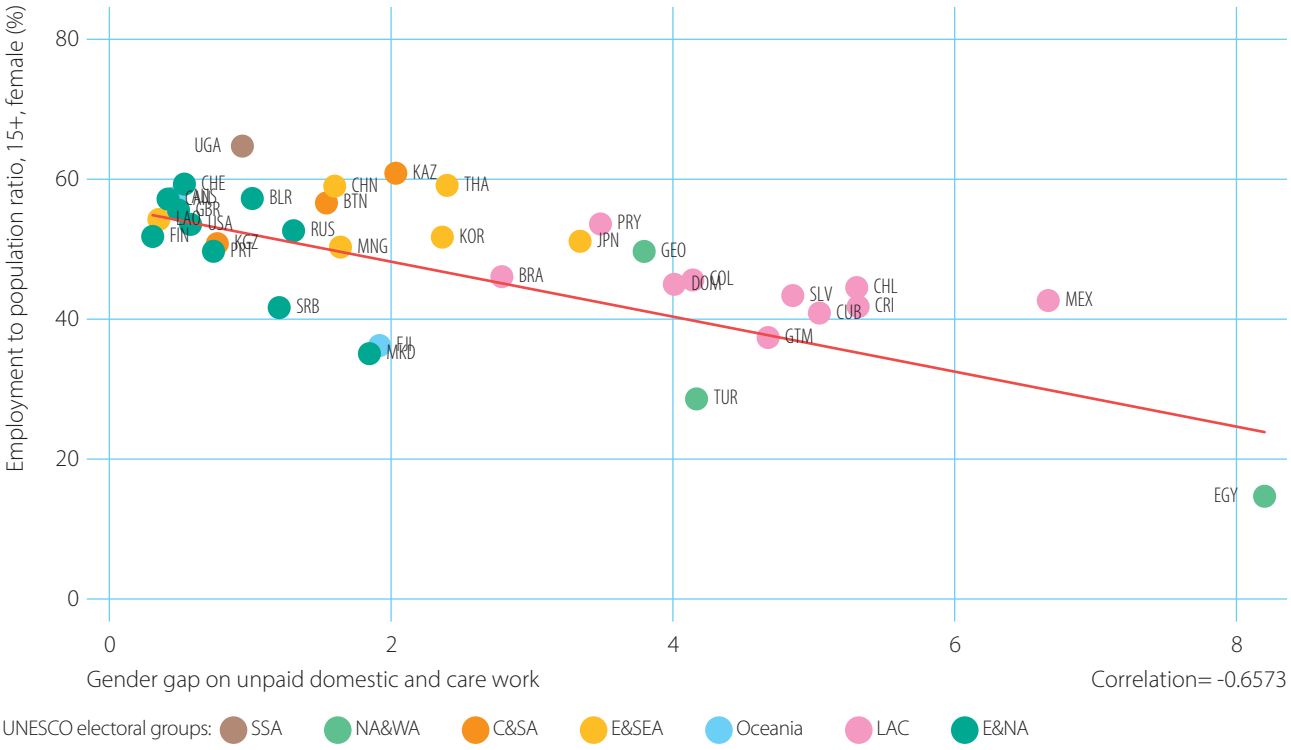
Daily hours spent by women in unpaid domestic and care work measures the average time women spend on household provision of services for their own consumption. This indicator corresponds to SDG 5.4.1.

Data are expressed as a proportion of time in a day. Domestic and care work includes food preparation, dishwashing, cleaning and upkeep of a dwelling, laundry, ironing, gardening, caring for pets, shopping, installation, servicing and repair of personal and household goods, childcare, and care of the sick, elderly or disabled household members, among others. The gender gap in unpaid domestic and care work is the difference between unpaid domestic and care work of women and men over the number of hours spent by men in these activities.

Being in a NEET and poverty condition generally stems from the obstacles that individuals encounter in relation to enrolling in education or participating in the labour market. Moreover, deeply ingrained and persistent gender stereotypes that continue to disproportionately assign caregiving roles to women and breadwinning roles to men (Oxfam, 2020) aggravate such patterns. These roles tend to exclude women – particularly those from marginalized or lower socioeconomic backgrounds – from paid employment, pushing them into unpaid caregiving roles and informal work sectors. This in turn limits their ability to contribute to household income, achieve economic independence, and access opportunities to develop their potential beyond family responsibilities. Research by ILO (2018) and UNWOMEN (2020) highlights how systemic barriers restrict women's economic and professional contributions, exacerbating existing inequalities. They show that while unpaid care work sustains families and economies, contributing an estimated $11 trillion annually to the global economy, it remains undervalued and disproportionately performed by women (UNWOMEN, 2020).

As shown in Figure 7, there is a clear link between time spent on unpaid work and reduced labour market participation for women. It would thus be important for policy interventions to prioritize the redistribution and recognition of unpaid care work, to foster resilience and equity in both the public and private spheres.

Figure 8: Employment rate and gender gap in unpaid work



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023. (Pooled data 2015-2022).

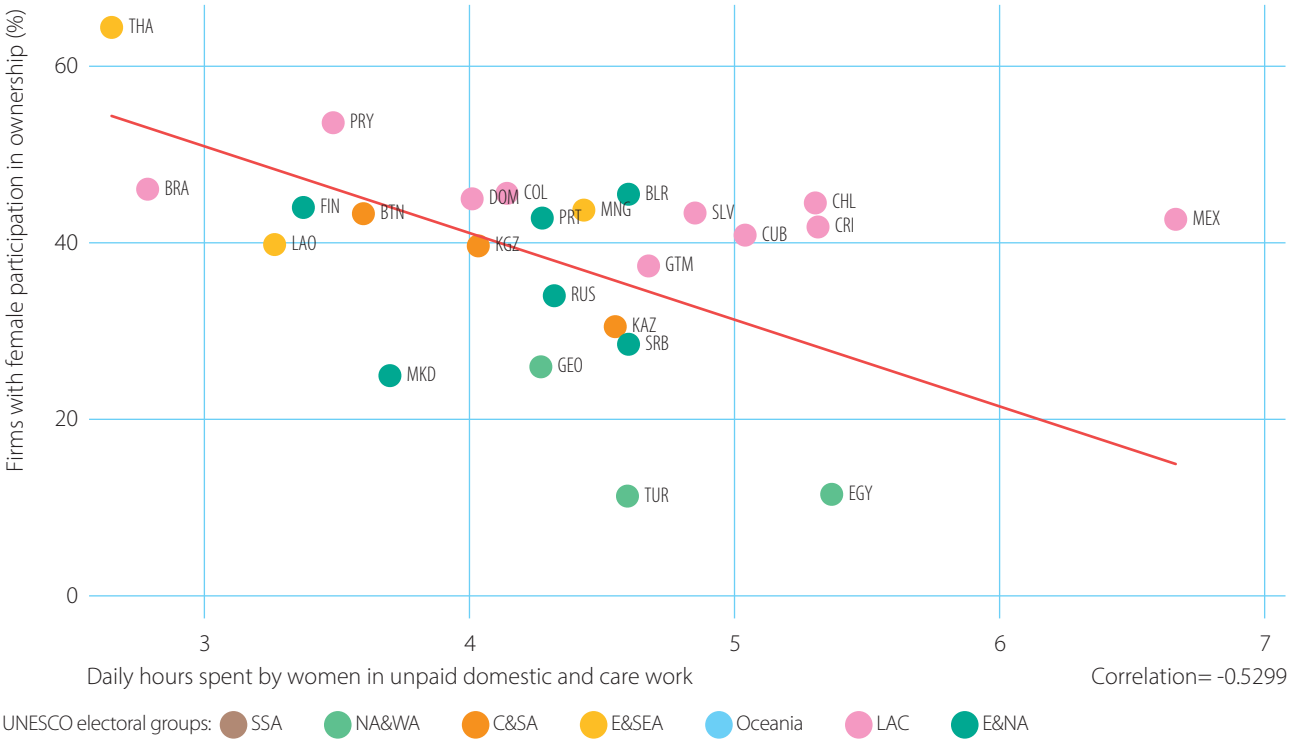
Note: Employment to population ratio is the proportion of women employed of age 15 and above over the female country's population. Employment is defined as persons of working age who, during a short reference period, were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit.

Daily hours spent by women in unpaid domestic and care work measures the average time women spend on household provision of services for their own consumption. This indicator corresponds to SDG 5.4.1.

While sharing family responsibilities should be a matter of fairness and of both parents being actively involved in raising their children, the reality paints a different picture. For every additional hour spent on unpaid care work, women's employment rate decreases by 5.9% (Figure 7). This marks a worsening trend compared to the figure proposed last year, when the decline was 4.4%. Countries such as Mexico and Egypt report the highest proportions of time that women spend on unpaid care work, while Brazil and Thailand report the lowest among the countries for which data are available. However, these figures should be interpreted with caution and further analysis is necessary to understand what drives such disparities.

The gender gap in unpaid care and domestic work has shown little improvement over time. In countries where women perform more than two additional hours in unpaid care and domestic work compared to men, female employment rates appear halved, at about 50%. When this gap increases to four hours, female employment rates fall further, at just 30% (Figure 8). Furthermore, the unequal distribution of unpaid work hinders women's ability to start and run their own businesses. As shown in Figure 9, there is a significant and negative association between female entrepreneurship and unpaid care and domestic work. Specifically, each additional hour of unpaid care and domestic work appears to be associated with a 4% decrease in the share of firms owned by women.

Figure 9: Female entrepreneurship and unpaid work



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023. (Pooled data 2015-2022).

Note: Daily hours spent by women in unpaid domestic and care work measures the average time women spend on household provision of services for their own consumption. This indicator corresponds to SDG 5.4.1. Firms with women's participation in ownership are the percentage of firms with a woman among the principal owners.

Overall, the statistics proposed thus far point to only modest improvements in the areas examined. Additional evidence about women in the labour market will be nevertheless proposed and discussed when assessing whether countries' have managed to meet the Brisbane Target (in Chapter 3), i.e. to reduce gender gaps in the labour force by 25% by 2025.

It is also important to note that not all statistics presented in the 2023 Gender-Based Resilience report could be updated to assess progress or lack thereof, as new information is not available for all countries. This hinders the ability to monitor possible improvements and highlights the need for up-to-date data, for accurate assessments to be possible.

Chapter 2.

Women in policy- and decision-making

Framing the issue

Ensuring women's presence in policy- and decision-making is critical for numerous reasons. Importantly, the right to public participation, including political participation, is a human right enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[5]. Women's involvement in decision-making – both in policy-and decision-making– ensures that they can contribute to shaping decisions that affect their lives and the lives of others, both in the short and long term. Holding a political office further grants legitimacy to make decisions that impact society as a whole (Paxton et al., 2021).

Decisions on resource allocation and investments, at any level of government (whether local, regional or national), including in public education, health and the world of work, are critical to fostering empowered and resilient societies. Especially when resources are scarce, decision makers may make choices that favour certain groups, such as prioritizing social benefits for specific low-income households while excluding others, or granting tax incentives to particular types of businesses.

The power to shape societal dynamics and institutions, including health and education systems, extends beyond merely choosing which initiatives to support. It is fundamentally influenced by how problems are defined and who is identified as the target of interventions. For instance, programmes designed to support families will vary significantly depending on how «family» is defined, along with the rights and responsibilities associated with that definition. These decisions have far-reaching implications for the inclusion and equity of public policies.

Policy making should serve the interests of the entire society, and laws are to be applied to all individuals, without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, religion or any other grounds. However, when decision-makers are predominantly male, or represent only one or few groups, there is a high likelihood that laws favouring the interests of women or of marginalized groups will not be prioritized (Carver, 2024).

Research on gender and decision-making has long underlined that men and women often bring different perspectives and priorities to policymaking (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986). Evidence suggests that the gender of legislators significantly influences policy preferences (Paxton et al., 2021) and shows that male MPs are less likely to champion women's interests as the proportion of women in parliament increases (Höhmann, 2020). This makes it even more important to strive for gender equality in policymaking, to ensure that the interests, needs, and aspirations of women and other underrepresented groups are effectively represented (Mechkova and Carlitz, 2021).

Female policymakers tend to advocate for policies that address social inequities, such as those affecting women, families, and marginalized groups (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004; Schwindt-Bayer and Squire, 2014). Evidence further indicates that increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies enhances the focus on policies that improve quality of life and promote equity across diverse populations (Hessami and Da Fonseca, 2020; Markham, 2013). Women's leadership in decision-making can also foster healthier and more equitable societal structures. Women's socialisation skills is found to shape their leadership style, making it more likely to be nurturing, collaborative, and rooted in empathy (Bell Hooks, 2015). Such leadership can be transformational in decision-making, especially when addressing issues of inequalities, social justice and gender-based discrimination. Women often bring critical perspectives shaped by their unique experiences of discrimination, contributing to more inclusive and equitable policy-making (Davis, 1981), thereby enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of policies (Lowndes, 2020).

Women's political representation has progressed significantly since the last century. In 1946, the UN General Assembly recommended that all Member States should "grant to women the same political rights as men" (Resolution 56). At that time, only around 50% of UN Member States recognized women's right to vote. This landmark resolution marked a crucial step towards the global recognition of women's political equality, setting a standard that would shape future progress for women's rights worldwide and establishing women's political rights as fundamental human rights (Childs, 2024).

Despite these advances, important discrepancies remain between formal and actual, impactful representation, leaving women still fighting for full political rights and meaningful participation. While women now enjoy political rights in 99% of countries worldwide, only fourteen grant full equal rights to women (World Bank, 2023). Moreover, according to

5 https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

IPU data,[6] amongst the countries analysed, only 54% exhibit more than 25% of women in their legislative bodies.

Formal representation alone does not suffice to ensure a substantive presence of women in decision-making (Paxton et al., 2021). For instance, while a growing number of female Ministers are being appointed around the world, they are often assigned to Ministries that are less likely to oversee key economic or strategic decisions, such as those related to Finance, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Justice or the Economy.[7] Moreover, as long as individuals continue to experience gender-based social and economic inequalities, they will face barriers to their ability to fully leverage their political opportunities. The structural disadvantages that women experience often translate into disparities in political outcomes, which in turn, can undermine their effective participation in policy and decision-making (Phillips, 1995).

In this respect, the concept of formal "political equality" is being progressively substituted by the "descriptive representation" concept, which underlines the need to ensure that political representation more accurately reflects the demographic composition of populations (Pitkin, 1967). Descriptive representation rests on the principle that in democracy, racial, ethnic and gender groups are uniquely positioned to represent their own perspectives.

Research has mainly focused on the functioning of electoral systems, party lists, and proportional representation and quota systems (Norris, 1996), highlighting the importance of providing historically marginalized or silenced groups with a voice in political institutions. By sharing common experiences and interests, these groups are often best equipped to represent their own needs and advocate effectively within legislative and decision-making processes (Paxton et al., 2021; Phillips, 1995).

Another concept that is relevant to women's representation is the one of "substantive representation", which relates to women politicians' ability and willingness to advocate and take action on issues that directly affect women, i.e. to speak for and act to support women's issues (Childs, 2024; Pitkin, 1967). Research argues that women in policy-making across the political spectrum and with different agendas still share more common ground with each other than with their male counterparts. This, however, does not mean that women are a homogenous group with homogenous interests (Coole, 2016). In some countries for instance, assuming that heterosexual white women's experiences were the norm, led at times to marginalizing the voices and experiences of women of colour (Strolovitch et al., 2017).

Today, many feminist scholars argue that, while increasing descriptive representation of women in policy making is necessary, this is not sufficient (Dolan et al., 2022). Increasing the participation of BIPOC[8], migrant and LGBTQIA+[9] individuals for instance can allow them to more effectively champion the issues that affect them and their communities. This diversity in representation ensures that the interests of underrepresented groups are better defended, while also bringing to the fore concerns that may have been neglected by the majority. (Mansbridge, 1999). The more diverse the voices, perspectives, and ideas from various groups, the more adaptable and change-ready systems may become, and thus more resilient.

In addition, the symbolic impact of diverse representation in political institutions is significant, particularly to foster trust and legitimacy. This is especially the case in contexts marked by a history of discrimination and distrust between minority and majority groups. In such settings, the inclusion of women, ethnic minorities, and marginalized groups in policy can inspire others from similar backgrounds to pursue public office (Dolan et al., 2022).

When assessing the difference that women can make in decision-making, research about Latin America shows that female legislators are more likely than their male counterparts to prioritize women's issues and family concerns, but their attitudes toward other policy areas such as the economy and employment are largely similar to those of their male colleagues (Schwindt-Bayer, 2006). Evidence also shows that increases in the number of female politicians are associated with greater spending on social programs, including education (Halim et al., 2016). Studies further reveal that greater participation of women in decision-making is significantly associated with lower mortality rates among women and children (Macmillan et al., 2018, Bagade et al., 2022).

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6 https://data.ipu.org/compare/?field=suffrage.right_to_vote&region=0&chart=map&year_to=#

7 For example, in France such Ministries are called "Regalian" Ministries, or referred to as the ***regalian functions of the State***. See, e.g. https://www.fo-dgfip-sd.fr/007/IMG/pdf/dafpe_admin_regal_etat_050310.pdf

8 BIPOC stands for for Black, Indigenous, People of Color. People are using the term to acknowledge that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice. They say BIPOC is significant in recognizing that Black and Indigenous people are severely impacted by systemic racial injustices. (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/BIPOC).

9 LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

In addition to improving health outcomes, the presence of women in elected local councils is also found to often be correlated to a reduction in large-scale corruption (Bauhr et al., 2018), the creation of more inclusive cities where structural inequalities are more effectively addressed (Baboun, 2018), greater GDP per capita growth (Dahlum et al., 2022) and greater police responsiveness, particularly in relation to tackling crimes against women and minorities (Dahlum et al., 2022).

In summary, the improved health outcomes, economic growth, security, safety, and equality that result from women's equal participation in decision-making enhance the wellbeing, welfare and resilience of societies.

The new CEDAW Recommendation 40 defines equal and inclusive representation as achieving parity between women and men, in all their diversity, with respect to both access to and power within decision-making (CEDAW, 2023). The distribution of decision-making capacity can be achieved through an empowerment and leadership model that leverages policies such as gender quotas, aimed at advancing gender equality and redefining women's leadership, to yield new outcomes. The critical mass theory supports this approach, suggesting that significant change occurs when a tipping point is reached, such as the 30% target for women's representation outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[10].

In social dynamics, "critical mass" refers to the point at which enough individuals within a system adopt a new idea, technology, or innovation, thereby triggering widespread change. Originally a concept from physics, critical mass in social science describes a set of conditions where a particular behaviour becomes reciprocal and self-sustaining (de Silva de Alwis, 2023). Achieving critical mass is crucial not only in a quantitative sense but also for its qualitative impact, encompassing elements such as reputation, shared goals, commitment, consensus, and decision-making capacity. From this perspective, reciprocal behaviour among individuals can drive transformative change through sustained collective action.

The critical mass theory was developed by Dahlerup and Kanter, who posited that women in political office struggle to effectively represent women's interest until they reach a significant minority among legislators. They also argued that, to achieve the necessary critical mass, female politicians had to overcome at least two primary barriers (Kanter, 2008). First, they must prove that they are equally capable as their male counterparts, a task rendered especially difficult by male politicians' longer tenures and historical dominance in the political arena (Dahlerup, 1988). Second, women must show that their increased representation leads to meaningful changes.

In *Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation* (Childs and Krook, 2008), Childs and Krook build on Dahlerup's concept and emphasize the twofold impact of reaching critical mass: advancing decisions related to women's interests and, serving as role models to inspire more women to enter policy making. They further argue for a reimagining of critical mass theory, advocating for greater focus on the relationship between descriptive representation (the presence of women) and substantive representation (advocating for women's issues) (Childs and Krook, 2008).

In addition to structural barriers, women's ambitions to hold political office are often thwarted by harmful stereotypes and misogynistic tactics that seek to undermine their competencies and capabilities. These attacks frequently draw on traditional gender roles, casting women as more suited to caregiving responsibilities, preferably within the home, rather than to positions of authority and leadership. Political misogyny manifests through disparaging rhetoric intended to amplify existing biases, associating women's political identities with negative attributes, to trigger and reinforce prejudiced beliefs and attitudes.

Women in policy- and decision-making are often subjected to contradictory criticisms—smiling too much makes them seem frivolous, while not smiling enough makes them appear assertive and unfriendly. They are scrutinized for being "too prepared" (perceived as overcompensating) or "underprepared" (seen as incompetent). Physical appearance is also weaponized: women may be deemed "too attractive" or "not attractive enough" to be taken seriously. Queer women, too, endure specific scrutiny. They are criticized for appearing too feminine or too masculine, reflecting the compounded biases they face in public life (Williamson, 2015). This misogynistic rhetoric often escalates into hate speech directed at women as a group. Ultimately, misogynistic language in policy- and decision-making spaces upholds dominant patriarchal norms, casting women as unworthy of political agency

10 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a resolution adopted by the United Nations as result of the Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women held in 1995. It promulgates 13 principles and measures corresponding to critical areas for advancing gender equality and women's rights.

and undermining their legitimacy. This contributes to diminishing individual women's standing and erodes the inclusivity and diversity that are essential for healthy democratic societies (Dovi, 2024).

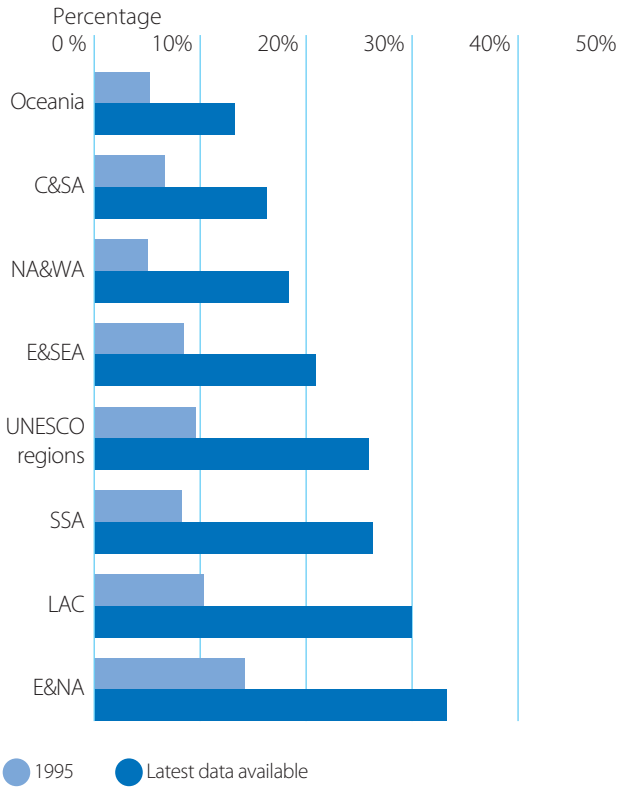
In addition, women in leadership positions worldwide often face additional layers of scrutiny and criticism compared to their male counterparts. Research consistently shows that female leaders are more likely to have their competence questioned, face gendered stereotypes, and endure personal attacks that focus on their appearance, family roles, or behaviours, rather than their policies or decisions (Van Der Pas and Aaldering, 2020). These biases are deeply rooted in societal perceptions of leadership as traditionally masculine and perpetuate barriers for women aspiring to decision-making roles. Women who despite all this navigate these challenges contribute to redefining leadership and inspire a more inclusive vision of governance, offering a hopeful trajectory for future generations.

Status quo, evolutions and challenges

Nearly thirty years have passed since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing set the goal to achieve a critical mass of 30% women in decision-making. Since then, significant strides have been made in increasing women's representation in national parliaments worldwide.

According to data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in 1995, women held only 10.1% of parliamentary seats and regional variations were substantial. Europe and North America had the highest representation at 14.2%. Recent data covering the period from 2020 to 2024, indicate that this figure has more than doubled, reaching an average of 25.9% across all UNESCO regions. Among the seven sub-regions, Europe and North America have reached critical mass, with a 33.4% rate. Latin America and the Caribbean are close to the target with 29.9%, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa at 26.3%, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia at 20.7%. In the remaining regions, women hold between 13% and 18% of all seats available in parliament (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Women in Parliament -1995-latest available data year



Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

In countries like Rwanda, women's representation in the national parliament has increased by 57 percentage points since 1995. The United Arab Emirates also improved importantly, progressing from having no women in parliament to achieving 50% representation in the most recent year for which data are available, in this case 2019. Additionally, Andorra and Monaco saw remarkable increases of 46.4 and 40.2 percentage points, respectively, between 1995 and 2023. As shown in Figure 10, Latin America and the Caribbean, along with Sub-Saharan Africa, have surpassed the 50% threshold, moving above countries in the Europe and Northern America group, which used to be at the forefront of women's representation in national parliaments with 14.2% of women MPs in 1995.

Over the past thirty years, the ranking of the top five countries with the highest representation of women in lower and single Houses of Parliament has shifted importantly. In 1995, in European countries, Sweden topped the list, at 40.4%, followed by Norway at 39.4%, Denmark and Finland at 33.5% both, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands at 32.7%. Today, countries from Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean feature among the top five, all having reached or exceeded 50% representation of women in parliament. Rwanda stands at the top with 61.3%, followed by

Cuba at 55.7%, Nicaragua at 53.8%, and the United Arab Emirates and Namibia, all at 50%, Costa Rica and Mexico at respectively 49% and 48.2%.

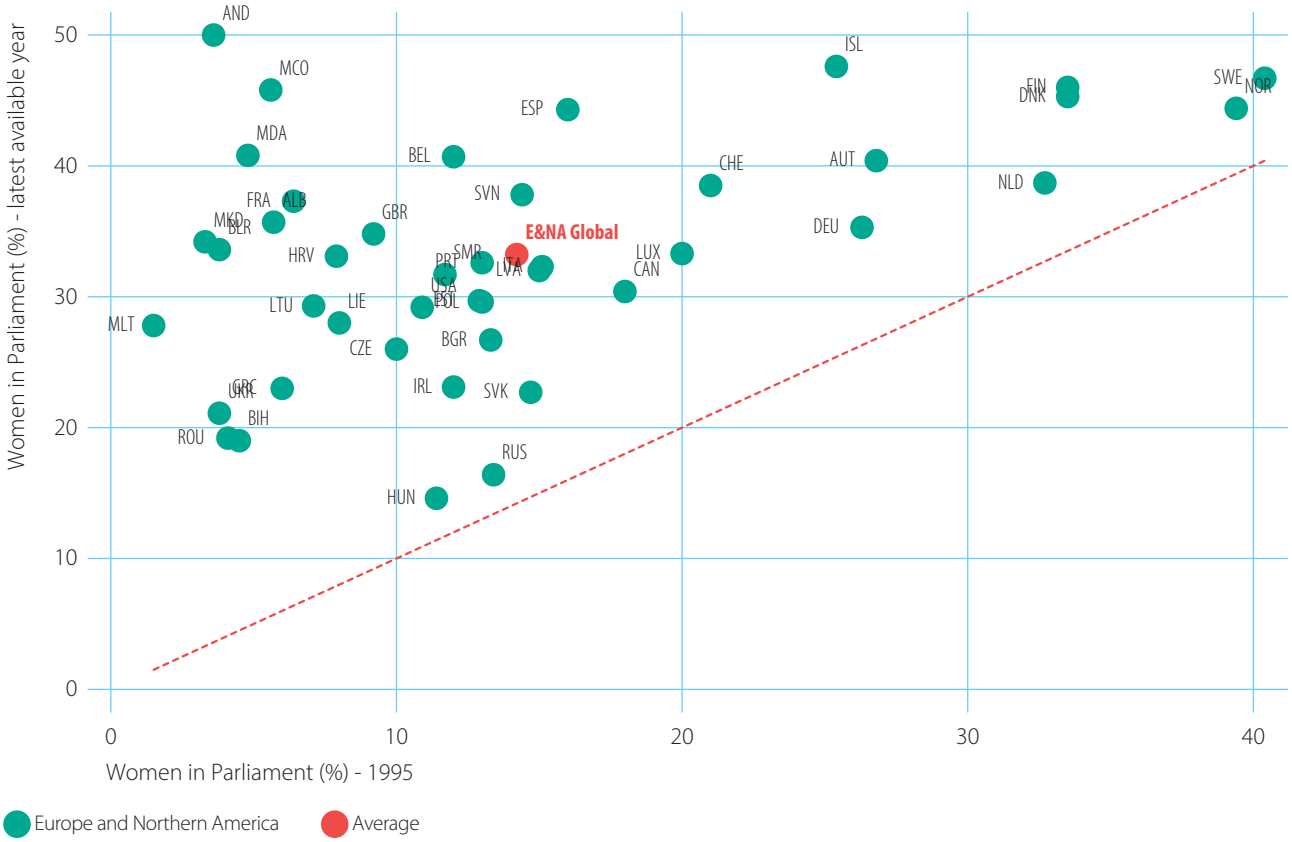
Parliaments worldwide are making significant strides toward gender parity. In 1995, only 2.9% of countries had 30% or more women members of parliament while in 60% of countries, women held fewer than 10% of the seats. Today, women have reached a critical mass threshold of 36% in national parliaments, on average, and the proportion of countries with less than 10% female representation has dropped to 11%. Additionally, nearly one in six countries (15%) now have 40% or more of parliamentary seats held by women.

Regional trends

Deep diving into regional dynamics, the data reveal that countries in Europe and North America, which started from relative high percentages, experienced relatively low increases in women's representation in Parliament since 1995. The 43 countries in the UNESCO's Europe and North America group reached the 33.4% threshold of seats held by women, on average (Figure 11). Future analysis may want to investigate the drivers and mechanisms leading to similar levels of women's representation in Parliament and the role of gender quota policies, particularly in EU countries where such policies are widely implemented, compared to other regions where they are less commonly adopted, to identify good practices.

The elements available point to results likely reflecting a combination of factors, including cultural shifts towards gender-equal value systems and long-standing advocacy by women's movements, some of which have been active for over a century (Teigen and Wängnerud, 2009). Additionally, most European countries have adopted either proportional or mixed electoral system that combine majoritarian and proportional elements. Evidence indicates that, globally, proportional systems are those most successful in creating an enabling environment for women's advancement in policy- and decision-making (Brechenmacher, 2018). This can also be partly explained by the "district magnitude" effect, which suggests that larger electoral districts tend to favour women's inclusion on party ballots, as they do not require parties to displace male candidates to make room for female candidates. In contrast, single-member districts often require parties to choose between male and female candidates, limiting opportunities for women's representation (Paxton et al., 2021).

Figure 11: Europe and Northern America: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



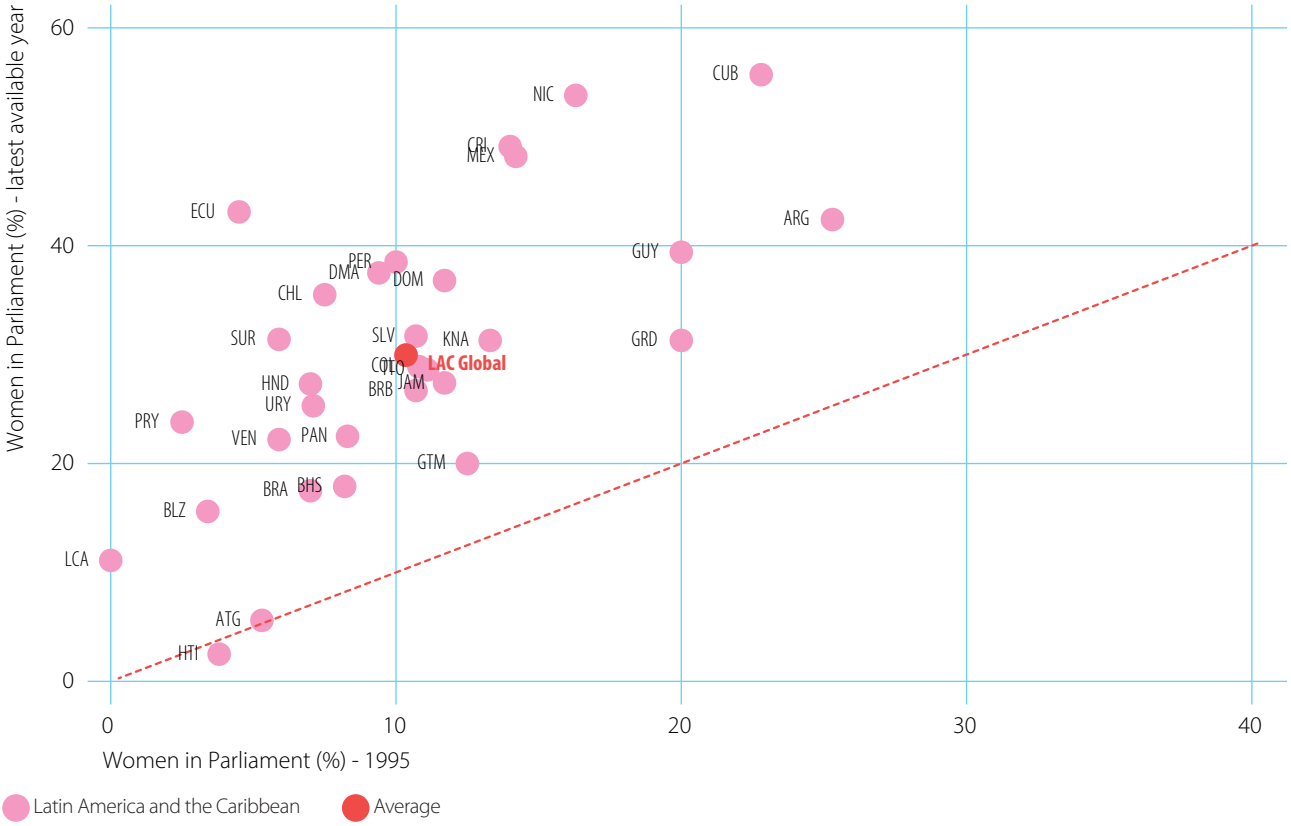
Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

Many scholars advocate for gender quotas as effective tools to overcome barriers preventing women from participating in the political arena. Many countries, among which Mexico and Rwanda, have indeed followed such advice and implemented either legislated quotas or voluntary party quotas (Clayton, 2021; Paxton and Hughes, 2015; Rosen, 2017).

In the United States of America, women's representation in parliament has increased from 18% in 1995 to 29.2% today. Canada is now approaching critical mass, with women's representation reaching 30.4% in 2024.

Figure 12: Latin America and the Caribbean: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

Adding a 45-degree line in *Figure 11* helps illustrate the percentage of female MPs and track changes over time. In Europe and North America most countries experienced an increase in the proportion of seats held by women. Andorra saw the most significant improvement, with an increase of nearly 13% between the two periods (over a total of 28 parliamentary seats available), followed by Iceland, where women's representation rose from 25.4% in 1995 to 47.6% today (over a total of 63 parliamentary seats).

Latin America and the Caribbean emerge as the region with the second-highest average percentage of women in parliamentary seats. Two of the top five countries with the highest share of female MPs are from the region: Cuba, which has increased women's representation in parliament by 32.9 percentage points since 1995; and Mexico, which has more than tripled this share, with women holding 48.2% of seats in 2020.

The case of Mexico is a successful story of gender quota implementation. After introducing quotas in the 1990s, the country strengthened its enforcement, achieving significant progress (IPU, 2020) and has recently elected the first female President of its history.

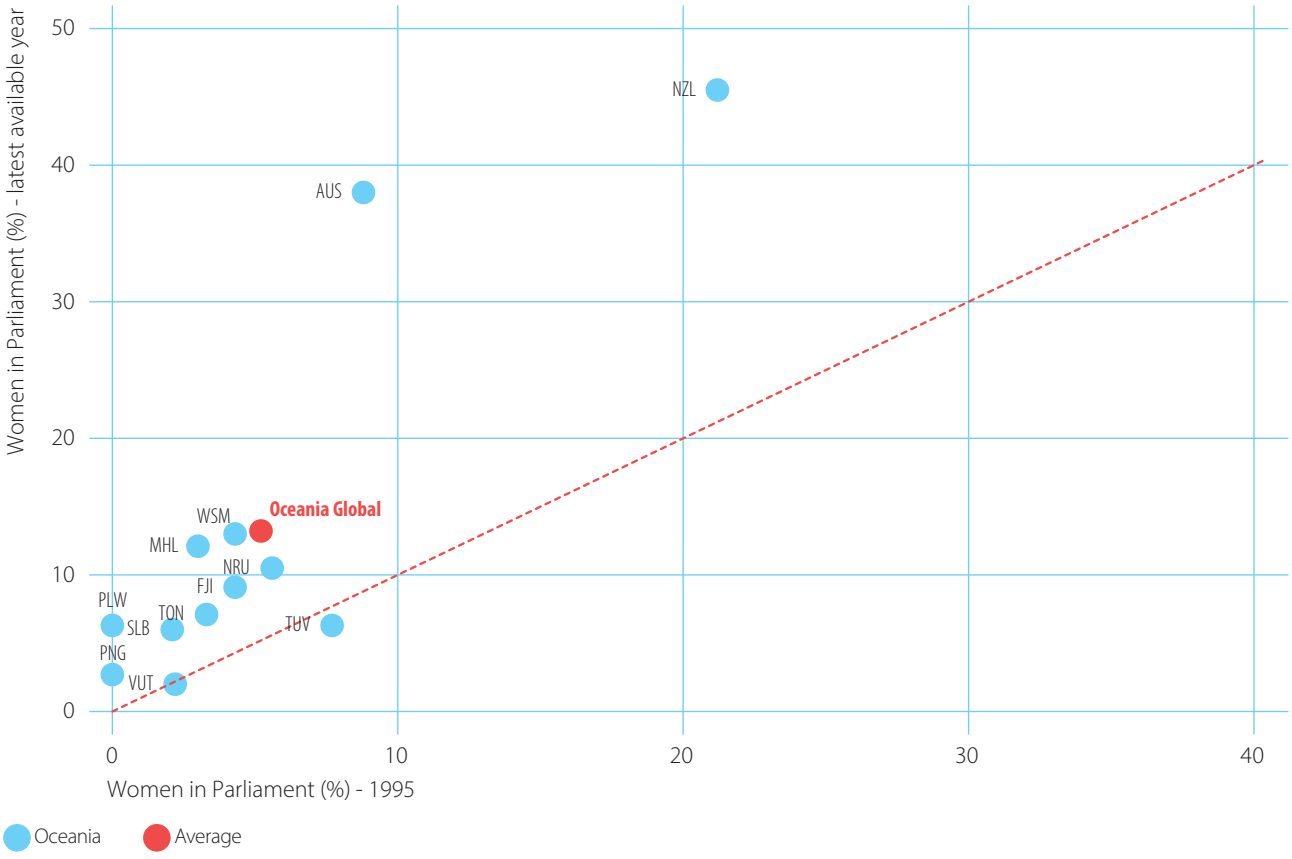
In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly all countries improved their shares of female MPs. In 1995, Argentina exhibited the highest share of women in parliament (25.3%), followed by Cuba (22.8%), while most other countries exhibited shares of less than 10%. Today, 48% of countries in the region have reached or surpassed the critical mass threshold of 30% of seats held by women. This progress is largely due to the adoption of equality measures and quotas in sixteen Latin American countries over the past thirty years (IPU, 2020). Ecuador exhibits one of the greatest improvements, with women's representation rising from 4.5% in 1995 to 43.1% in 2023. Brazil, which implemented a gender

quota system, increased women's parliamentary seats from 7% in 1995 to 15.6% in 2023. Experts credit measures like court rulings on public funding for campaigns, introduced in 2014, with supporting this progress by promoting transparency and reducing traditional campaign financing biases which tended to favour men (Vallejo, 2024).

In Oceania, a UNESCO regional group composed of ten Small Island Developing States (SIDS) along with New Zealand and Australia, the average share of women in parliament stands at 13.2% for the most recent year for which data are available. This share represents an 8-percentage point absolute increase since 1995, with figures that are mainly driven by New Zealand and Australia, both of which surpassed the critical mass threshold in 2023. In particular, New Zealand increased its women's representation going from 21.2% in 1995 to 45.55 % in 2023, and Australia rose from 8.8% in 1995 to 38% (Figure 13). Papua New Guinea and Palau, which had no female representation in 1995, now exhibit rates of 2.7% and 12.5% respectively. A notable example in this region is represented by Fiji, where women's representation in policy- and decision-making has improved significantly from 4.3% in 1995 to 19.6% in 2020. This major stride towards gender equality in policy- and decision-making is said to have been largely driven by the appointment of Fiji's first female Speaker Dr. Jiko Luvenii, who may have inspired many women to enter politics. She introduced a mandate for gender mainstreaming in parliament and established a women's caucus, successfully engaging female parliamentarians (IPU, 2020).

In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), women face several barriers to their active participation in political life. The geographical dispersion of islands, often located far apart, makes it challenging for women to campaign. The costs associated with travelling, coupled with the difficulty of balancing campaigning with family responsibilities – especially in the absence of external support – can deter women from stepping into politics. Moreover, men traditionally hold positions as local chiefs, a practice that often extends to the national political arena, and that can contribute to leave women aside (IPU, 2020).

Figure 13: Oceania: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year

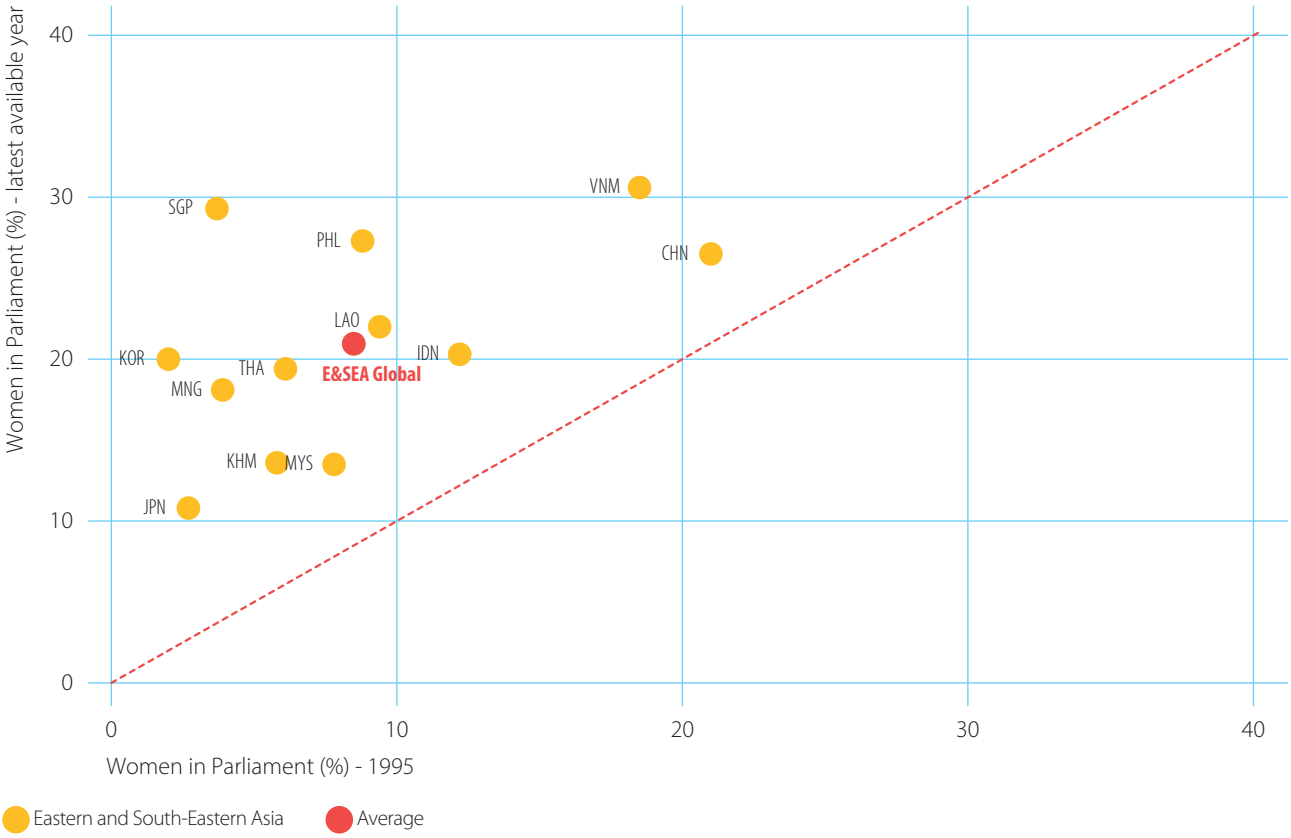


Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data–IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, the average proportion of women in national parliaments has significantly improved over time. In 1995, women held 8.5% of seats, a figure that has since increased by 12.4 percentage points in absolute terms, bringing the current share to nearly 21%. Although countries in this region differ widely in terms of characteristics including electoral systems, structural settings and cultures, the gap in women's representation has narrowed over the past thirty years almost everywhere. Today, two out of the thirteen countries — Vietnam with 30.6% and Singapore with 29.3% in 2023 — are approaching or have reached critical mass. One of the most remarkable progresses could be observed in the Republic of Korea, experiencing a tenfold increase in women's representation since 1995, and reaching 20% in 2024 (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

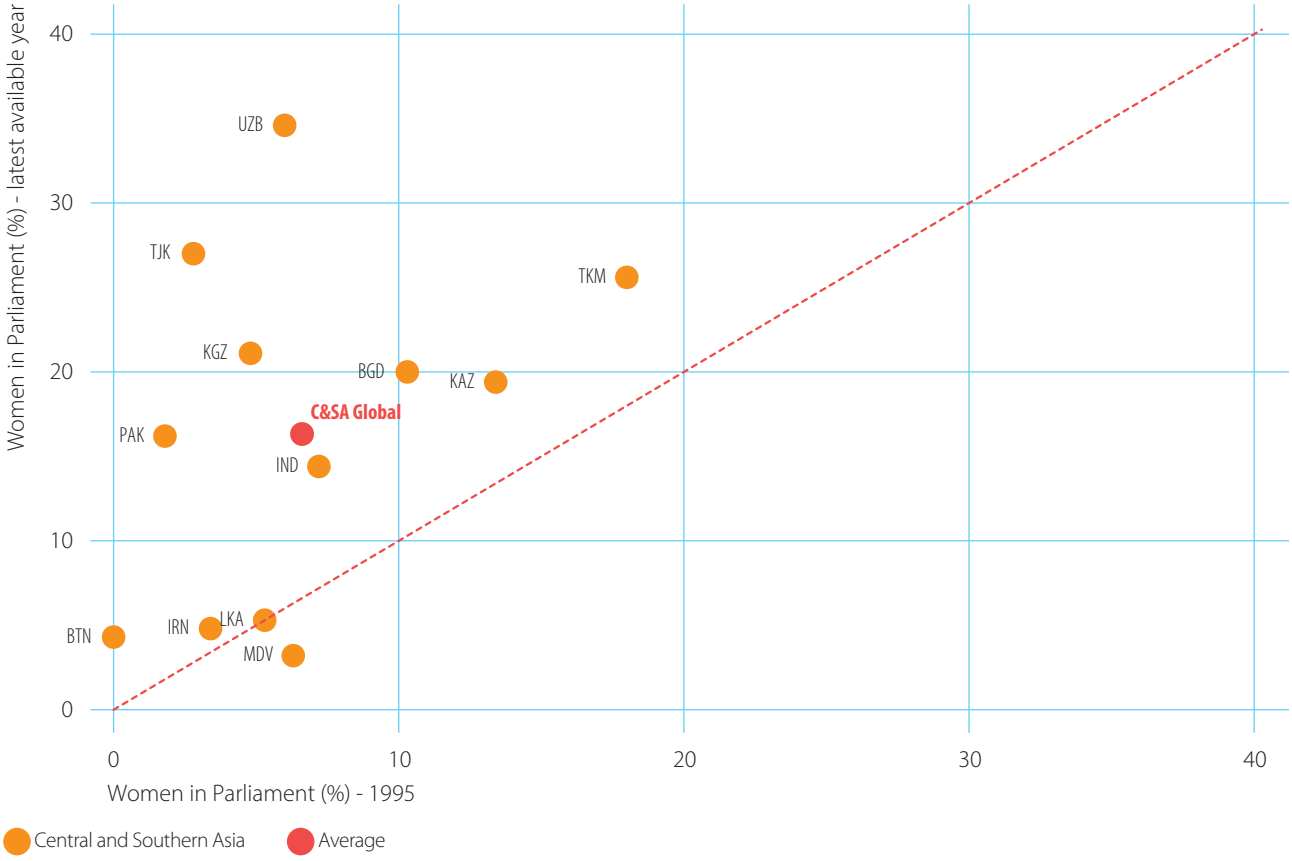
In Central and Southern Asia (Figure 15), women currently hold an average of 16.3% of parliamentary seats across the region. In 1995, three-quarters of countries in the region had less than 10% women representation in parliament. By 2020, only a few countries remained below the 10% threshold. As of 2023, Uzbekistan is the only country in the region that has surpassed 30% women's representation, achieving 34.7% - corresponding to an absolute increase of 28.6 percentage points since 1995. Also in 2020, one-third of the countries in the region had surpassed the 20% threshold for women's parliamentary seats, including Pakistan (20.2%), Bangladesh (20.9%), Turkmenistan (25%), and Kazakhstan (27.1%).

An interesting case is the one of Bhutan. In 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was signed, Bhutan had no women in parliament due to barriers such as the university degree requirement and a ban on civil servants running for office, which excluded most educated women (IPU, 2020). However, by 2020, female representation in parliament rose to 14.9%, thanks to three decades of efforts by civil society and women's networks.

Within the Central and Southern Asia group, Afghanistan represents a case. During two decades of governance reform (between 2001 to 2021), the country witnessed significant progress in living conditions and the development of laws and policies

aimed at enhancing gender equality. Between 2005 and 2018, women's representation had increased to 27.8% of seats in the lower house and 27.4% in the upper house. However, since August 2021, when the Taliban took over the country, these gains have been swiftly reversed. The Taliban authorities have systematically eroded the fundamental human rights of women and girls, severely restricting their rights to expression, mobility, access to education and professional opportunities. The latest restrictive and abusive measures, the "Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" law, issued by the authorities in August a 2024, imposes a discriminatory dress code for women, restricts women's movement, forbids that women speak in public or to each other, and bans news media from publishing images of all living things. This law represents yet another violation of international human rights and an act of severe dehumanisation of women and girls in Afghanistan. This stark reversal underscores how progress for women's rights, even when significant, can never be taken for granted. It highlights the fragility of advancements in the face of systemic oppression and the urgent need for sustained efforts to safeguard these achievements globally.

Figure 15: Central and Southern Asia: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



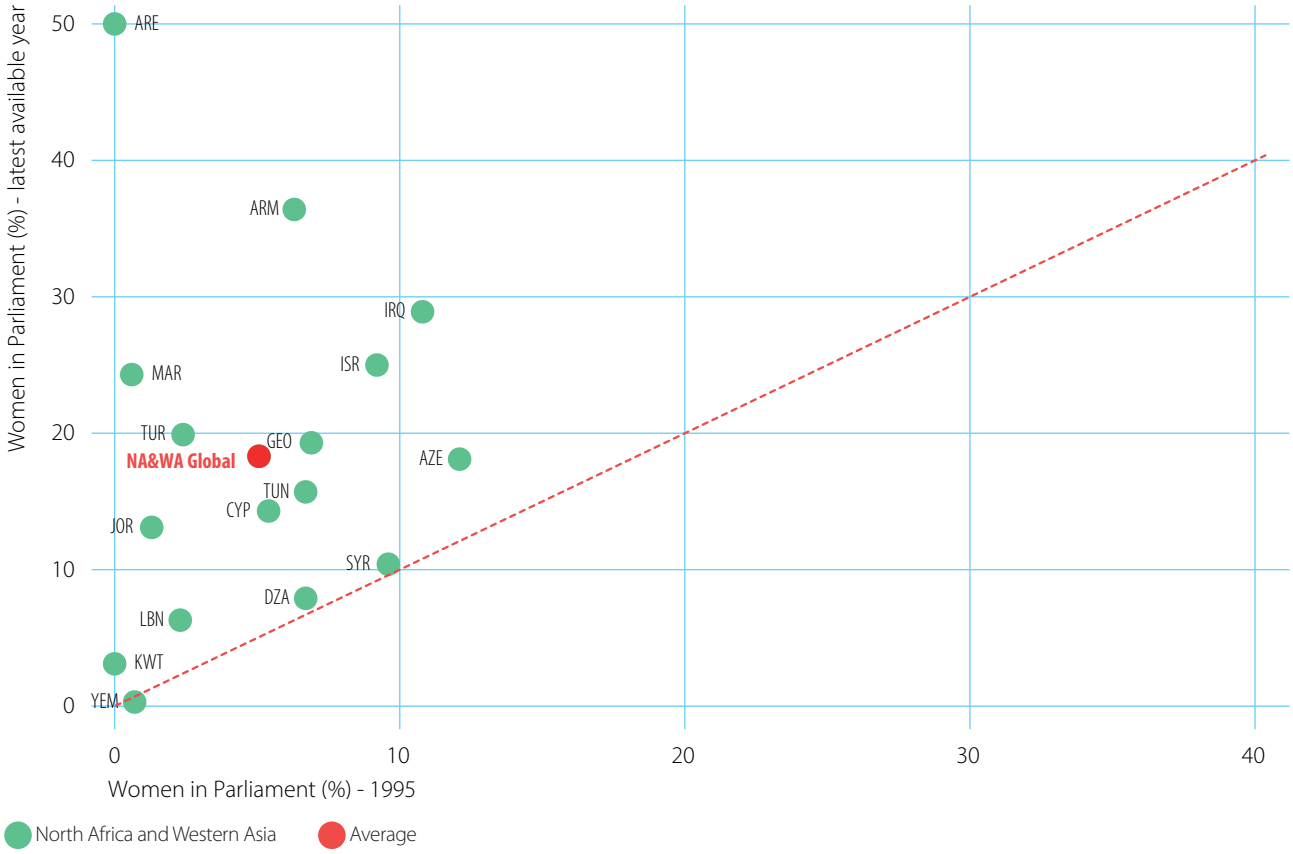
Source : Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

Among all considered regions, North Africa and Western Asia exhibited the lowest level of women's representation in 1995, at 5.6%, percentage that rose to 13.25% by 2020 (Figure 16). One of the factors contributing to this rise was the introduction of quota systems in some cases, like the presidential decree in the United Arab Emirates. In 1995, there were no women in the Emirati Parliament; but three decades later, the country is the first in the region to achieve gender parity in parliament.

Although challenges persist in achieving full political participation for women in North Africa and Western Asia, there have been some notable advances. In 2016, Algeria, and in 2017, Tunisia, enacted laws criminalizing violence against women, including political violence. These legislative measures contributed to significantly increase women's representation in parliament, with women holding 24.9% of seats in Tunisia and 25.8% in Algeria in 2020.

Figure 16: Northern Africa and Western Asia: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



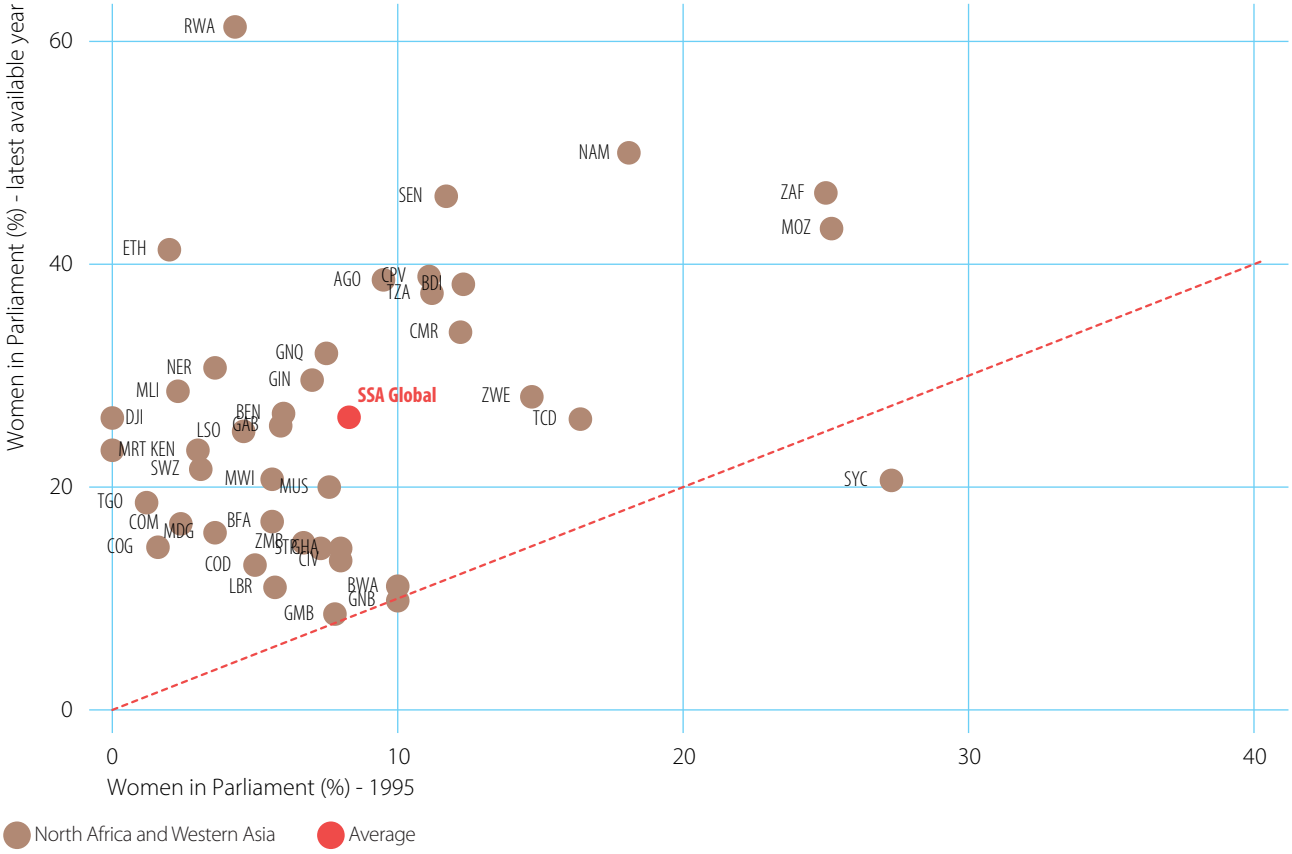
Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Note: the dotted line represents the 45 line which helps to better see improvements. Latest available years refer to the latest year for which data are available, mostly 2022, 2023 and 2024 and in few cases 2020.

Elsewhere in the region, Armenia surpassed the critical mass of women's representation, steadily improving since 1995, to reach 36% in 2024. Iraq has also made progress, with women holding 28.9% of seats in recent years.

Sub-Saharan African countries rank second only to Latin America and the Caribbean in terms of women's representation in national parliaments, as shown in Figure 17. Since 2020, Rwanda has led in this regard, with women holding 61% of parliamentary seats. Rwanda's success can be partly attributed to the introduction of gender quotas, reserving at least 30% of seats for women. This policy led to remarkable progress increasing female representation from just 4.3% in 1995, significantly improving the socioeconomic conditions and legal status of women in the country (IPU, 2020).

Figure 17: Sub-Saharan Africa: women in parliament between 1995 and the latest available year



Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

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In the most recent year for which data are available, women held more than 25% of parliamentary seats in twenty-two out of forty-one countries in the region. This represents substantial progress in advancing women's political rights, especially considering that in 1995, twenty-eight out of these forty-one countries had less than 10% women's representation in parliament. Notably, Djibouti and Mauritania had no women in parliament in 1995, and by 2024 women's representation increased to 26.2% and 23.3%, respectively. Additionally, between 2022 and 2024, six countries surpassed 40% women's representation in parliament: Ethiopia (41.3%), Mozambique (43.2%), Senegal (46.1%), South Africa (46.4%), Namibia (50%), and Rwanda (61.3%).

Gender diversity in parliaments

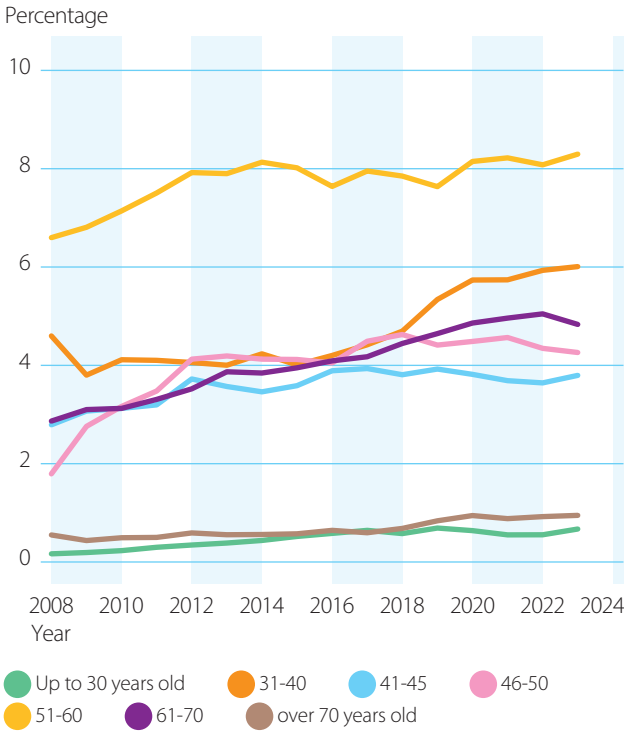
A higher representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in national parliaments can positively influence the legislative process, potentially fostering greater equality for LGBTQIA+ communities. Research suggests that countries with more progressive LGBTQIA+ rights often have had some degree of LGBTQIA+ representation for an extended period (Reynolds, 2013)gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT. While no official statistics currently track LGBTQIA+ representation in parliaments, institutional mechanisms exist to advance their rights. For instance, the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, established in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008, focuses on promoting human rights, repealing discriminatory laws, combating hate violence, and improving LGBTQIA+ health and well-being. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT+ Rights plays a similar role. Additionally, the European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBTI Rights, the largest intergroup within the parliament, currently comprises 150 members from various political backgrounds.

Political representation by gender and age

The connection between descriptive and substantive representation is also tied to the issues at the intersection of gender and age. It would only be fair that those who will experience the future for a longer period shall have a voice in shaping it. Older leaders can leverage their experience, which is often invaluable, but can also overlook younger people's perspectives and concerns as their time horizons are shorter (Bidadanure, 2021). This is especially true for challenges such as climate change, education, intergenerational social justice, or economic inequalities. Additionally, young people make up a significant portion of the global population, with notable demographic variations across countries and regions.

69.7% of countries worldwide have set the minimum age for holding office higher than the voting age (IPU, 2023). This age threshold is often justified by the belief that formal policy- and decision-making requires a high(er) level of accountability, responsibility, and competence – qualities associated with seniority. Yet, research indicates that older leaders do not necessarily perform better in office than younger politicians (Magni-Berton and Panel, 2021). The inclusion of young people in parliament raises important questions about representation systems in political bodies (Seery, 2011). The political disengagement of young people, often reflected in low voter turnout, could be reduced with more youth representation in parliaments and elected bodies. Young legislators would provide both symbolic and substantive representation, ensuring their issues are prioritized and encouraging greater youth engagement in policy- and decision-making (Stockemer and Sundström, 2022).

Figure 18: Distribution of female MPs by age cohort

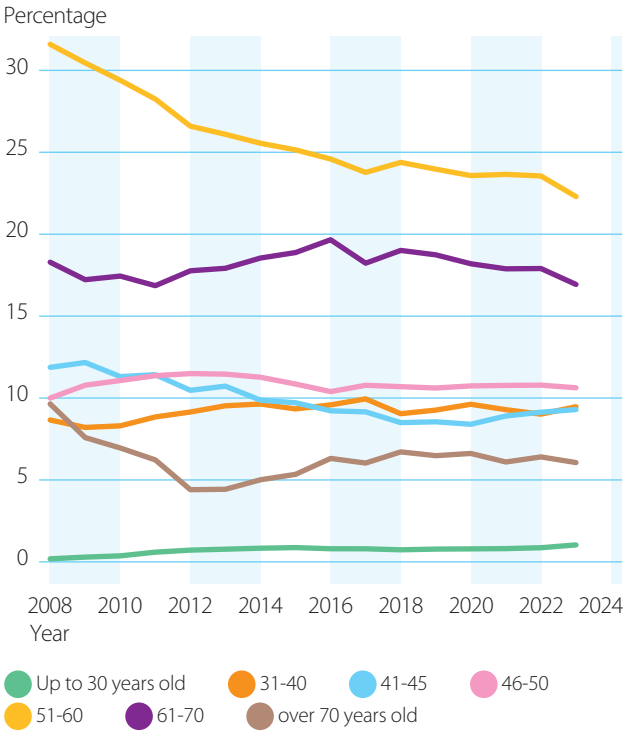


Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

When examining the distribution of representatives in all chambers by gender and age over time, differences emerge in the share of seats held by women as compared to men. Both genders reach their peak representation between 51 and 60 years old, a consistent trend since 2008. However, over the past fifteen years, the highest share of seats held by women peaked at just 10% in 2022, whereas men's representation ranged from a high of 36% in 2009 to 21% in 2023 for the same age cohort. Since 2018, women aged 31-40 have become the second most represented age group among female MPs, peaking at 7% in 2021, followed by women aged 61-70. Young women under 30 have conversely consistently made up less than 1% of MPs over the past fifteen years.

The age distribution for male MPs reveals a different pattern. Aside from the 51-60 age group, men over 50 have consistently held the largest share of seats since 2008, with the 46-50 age group being the second most represented. The youngest male MPs under 30 are the least represented, peaking at 1.2% of seats in 2023. Notably, the proportion of male MPs over 70 has remained steady, at around 8%, since 2012, roughly equivalent to the share of seats held by women in their most represented age group.

Figure 19: Distribution of male MPs by age cohort



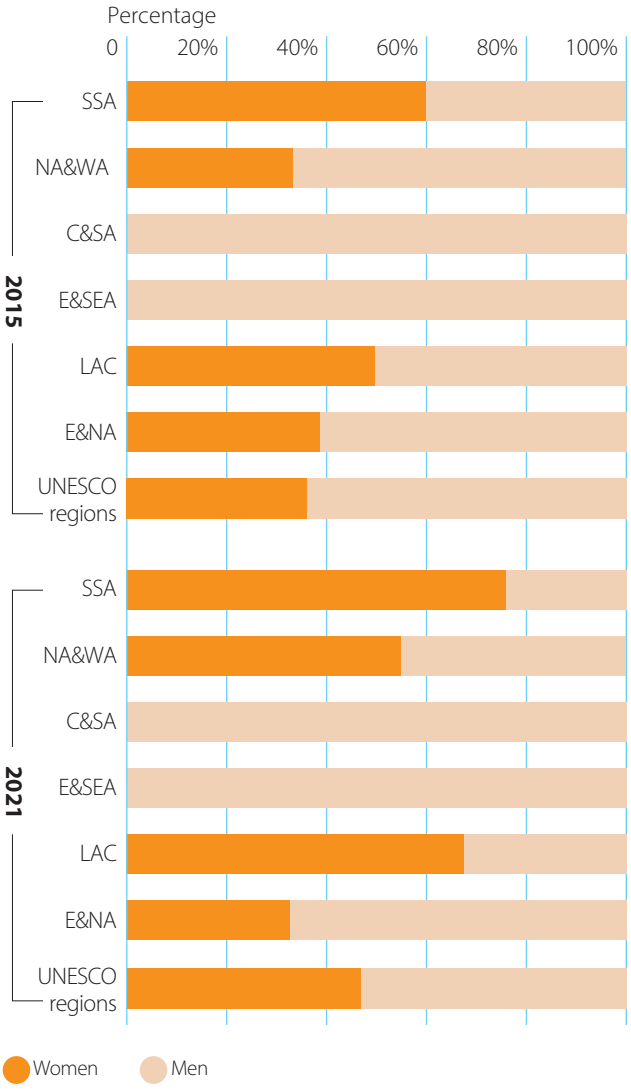
Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Focusing on the gender distribution of youth MPs across UNESCO regions, and considering all the Chambers, it can be seen that the share of young parliamentarians below the age of 30 has increased since 2015, but remains less than 3%, namely 1.4% in 2015 and in 2021 is of 2.3%. As the parliamentarian age increases to 40 years old, it also increases their representation to respectively 14.6% in 2015 and 17.7% in 2021.

Looking at MPs under 30 years old across different regions, in 2015, one sees that women held 36% of seats across all regions, on average, while men held 63%. By 2021, women's representation among young MPs had increased by 11 percentage points. However, this growth was not consistent across all regions, and important differences emerged. In two out of the six regions — namely, Central and Southern Asia, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia — young women were absent in both periods (Oceania could not be assessed due to lack of data).

In the other regions, the proportion of seats held by young women generally increased. In Sub-Saharan Africa, young women made up 71% of the young MPs in 2021, reflecting a 16-percentage-point absolute increase since 2015. In Latin America and the Caribbean, young women held 67% of seats in 2021, while in Northern Africa and Western Asia, the figure reached 55%, marking a 20-percentage-point improvement over six years.

Figure 20: Age and gender distribution of MPs by regions (All Chambers: 2015-2021 comparison)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on Inter Parliamentarian Union data-IPU, 2024.

Results call for a greater inclusion of young MPs in national parliaments, and a balanced representation of both women and men. It would be important for countries to address the underrepresentation of youth, which to some extent constitutes a sort of democratic deficit in governments, parliaments, and political parties, possibly through the implementation of institutional reforms. These could include lowering the age of eligibility to stand for office to align with voting age, developing new recruitment strategies, establishing youth quotas, and strengthening the role of party youth wings.

Moreover, the findings highlight that women face compounded discrimination based on both age and gender, despite research showing that diversity across various characteristics enhances perspectives and overall organizational efficiency (McKinsey, 2020).

The analysis above suggests that strengthening the resilience of countries may also entail improving the diversity of political representatives. Young parliamentarians can offer fresh perspectives to entrenched issues. Also, since youth are the ones that will bear the long-term consequences of today's political decisions, it would only be fair and effective to include their voices in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, over the past thirty years, decision-making bodies have gradually become more open to female participation. In 1995, women held only 10.1% of parliamentary seats; by 2024, this share had more than doubled to an average of 25.9% across UNESCO regions. However, only 35% of countries have reached the critical threshold of 30% female representation, 79% of which have adopted gender quota systems. Conversely, women hold fewer than 11% of parliamentary seat in 10% of countries, with just 3 out of these 19 nations implementing gender quotas.

Gender parity in parliament is not just a desirable goal; fostering political leadership among empowered women is crucial to improve representation in decision-making bodies. The underrepresentation of women in political leadership reflects broader democratic shortcomings and undermines the legitimacy of democratic ideals. According to the V Dem classification of global regimes, from 2020 to 2024, women-held 33.6% of parliamentary seats in liberal democracies.

Achieving gender parity and promoting women's participation in decision-making roles are essential tools for strengthening democracy and ensuring resilience. Gender parity extends beyond the implementation of quotas; it requires ensuring that women's representation translates into substantive influence over policy and governance.

Case studies: Elections in 2024

Elections have the power to shift the paradigm from "business as usual" to one that proactively addresses pressing issues. The unprecedented number of elections held around the world in 2024 has presented humanity with the opportunity to renew its political leadership and enhance diversity, with over half the global population—approximately 4.1 billion people — expected to elect their political representatives. Around seventy-five countries[11] held either presidential or parliamentary elections, including seven of the world's most populous nations: India, the United States of America, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Mexico, and the Russian Federation.

Nearly thirty years after the Beijing Platform for Action and related Declaration, which set the goal of increasing women's presence in power and decision-making, the issue of gender representation in policy- and decision-making remains critical. The 2024 elections provide an opportunity to reflect on the progress achieved and identify strategies to further close the gender gap, ensuring that political institutions are more inclusive and representative of societies they serve.

Worldwide parliamentary and presidential elections in 2024

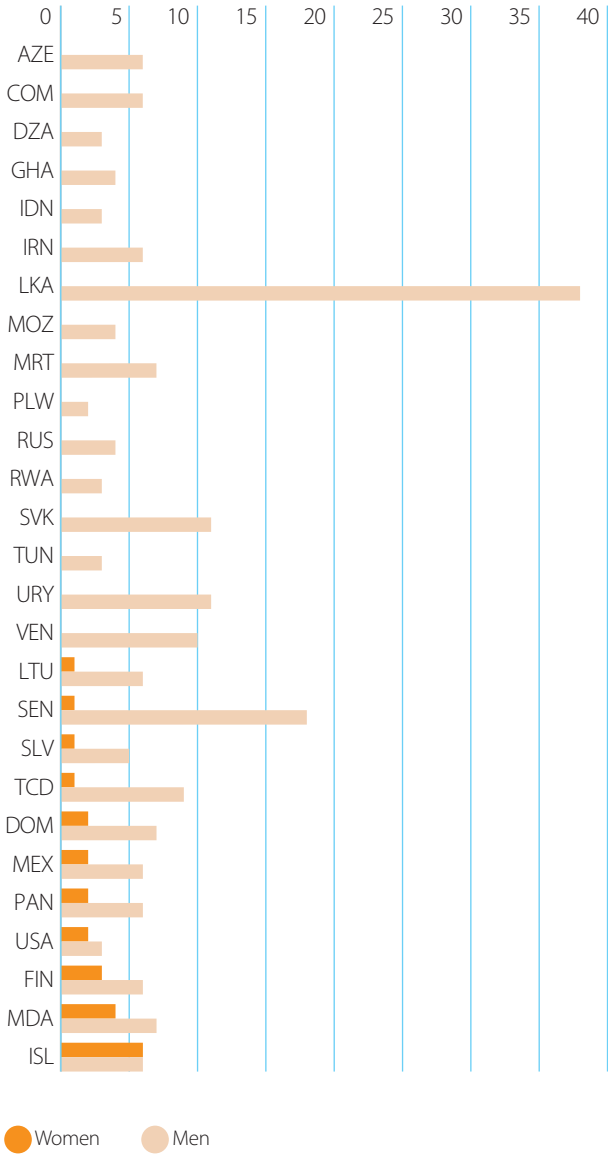
The data presented in this section are the result of a first-hand data gathering exercise from the countries' official sources related to both presidential and parliamentary elections. The data collection started in January 2024 with the elections of the National Assembly of Bhutan and ended in November, after the elections in the United States of America.

Figure 21 presents data on presidential candidates from elections held in 27 countries during the year 2024[12]. An overrepresentation of male candidates in nearly all countries considered emerges, with Iceland standing out as the only country with gender parity among candidates, despite the absence of gender quota laws.

11 https://time.com/6991526/world-elections-results-2024/

12 Countries and corresponding election day in brackets holding presidential elections in 2024 were: Algeria (07/09/24), Azerbaijan (07/02/24), Chad (06/05/24), Comoros (14/01/24), Dominican Republic (19/05/24), El Salvador (04/02/24), Finland (28/01/24), Ghana (07/12/24), Iceland (01/06/24), Indonesia (14/02/24), Iran 01/03/24), Lithuania (12/05/24), Mauritania (29/06/24), Mexico (02/06/24), Moldova (20/10/24), Namibia (27/11/24), Palau (05/11/24), Panama (05/05/24), The Russian Federation (17/03/24), Rwanda (15/07/24), Senegal (10/04/24), Slovakia (23/03/24), Sri Lanka (21/09/24), Tunisia (06/10/24), United States (05/11/24), Uruguay. (27/10/24), Venezuela (28/07/24).

Figure 21: Candidates to the national presidential election in 2024

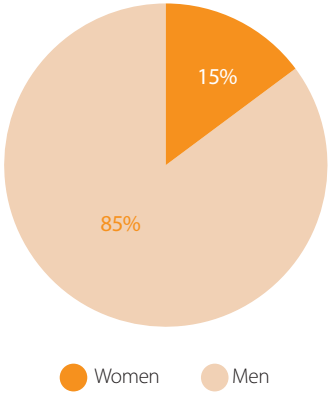


Last update: 2024 11 20

Source: UNESCO's own data collection based on countries' official data, 2024.

At the time of finalizing this report, in November 2024, an analysis of the 2024 elections indicates that only 4 women were elected as presidents, namely in Finland, Iceland, Mexico and Moldova, out of a total of 27 countries that held presidential elections. In 16 of these countries, there were no women candidates, leading to a success rate of 36%[13]. While this figure may appear to be a mathematical abstraction, the reality remains that in 14 out of 25 countries, women did not have the opportunity to actively participate in political leadership.

Figure 22: Gender distribution of presidents elected



Last update: 2024 11 20

Source data: UNESCO's own data collection based on countries' official data, 2024.

13 The success rate is calculated as the number of women elected over the number of countries where women candidates were present, i.e. 4/11.

Table 1: Number of representatives elected at the national parliaments

Country	Code	Gender quota	Women	% Wsomen	Men	% Men
Maldives	MDV	No	3	3,2	90	96,8
Tuvalu	TUV	No	1	3,3	29	96,7
Bhutan	BTN	No	8	5,6	134	94,4
Iran	IRN	No	16	5,6	268	94,4
India	IND	No	74	13,7	468	86,3
Pakistan	PAK	No	50	16,2	259	83,8
Togo	TGO	Yes	21	18,6	92	81,4
Cambodia	KHM	No	12	19,4	50	80,6
Bangladesh	BGD	No	70	20,0	280	80,0
South Korea	KOR	Yes	60	20,0	240	80,0
Indonesia	IDN	Yes	116	20,2	459	79,8
Mongolia	MNG	Yes	32	25,4	94	74,6
Uruguay	URY	Yes	37	28,7	92	71,3
Rwanda	RWA	Yes	24	30,0	56	70,0
San Marino	SMR	Yes	18	30,0	42	70,0
El Salvador	SLV	Yes	19	31,7	41	68,3
Portugal	PRT	Yes	75	32,6	155	67,4
Croatia	HRV	Yes	50	33,1	101	66,9
Belarus	BLR	No	37	33,6	73	66,4
France	FRA	Yes	208	36,0	369	64,0
Austria	AUT	Yes	66	36,1	117	63,9
North Macedonia	MKD	Yes	47	39,2	73	60,8
United Kingdom	GBR	Yes	263	40,5	387	59,5
South Africa	ZAF	Yes	177	45,3	214	54,7

Source data: UNESCO's own data collection based on countries' official data, 2024.

Note: In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and South Africa gender quota applies to the Lower chamber but not to the upper one. Last update: 2024 11 08

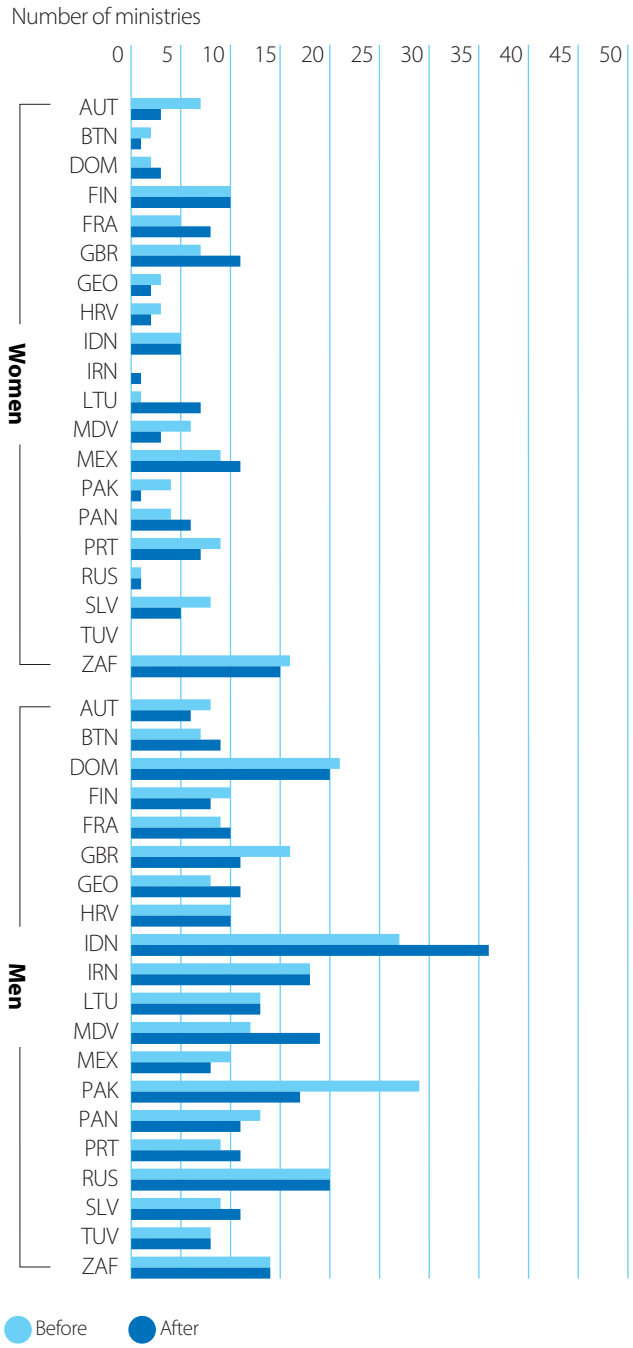
The situation differs slightly when examining national parliamentary elections globally. In 11 out of 27 countries, women have reached the critical threshold of 30% representation in parliament, while in four countries, their presence remains below about 6 %. This numerical imbalance may hinder efforts to promote women-related policies. Interestingly, two-thirds of the countries analysed have adopted gender quotas. Among those that reached or exceeded the 30% threshold, almost all implemented such quotas, highlighting the effectiveness of this approach in boosting women's representation in parliament.

Figure 23 illustrates the number of female government members before and after the recent elections across countries for which data are available. The comparison indicates that women's representation improved in 8 out of 20 countries.

In Lithuania, women's representation in ministerial roles increased significantly, from 7% before the election to 35% once the government was formed, after the elections. Following the 2024 elections, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland displayed gender parity in its government composition. In Mexico and Panama, women now hold 58% and 35%, respectively, of ministerial seats, following the elections. Finland, which had already achieved parity, saw an increase, with women now representing 55% of the government. In South Africa, women hold 14 out of

29 ministerial positions, while in France representation increased from 35% to 44%. In other countries for which data are available, women's representation either declined or remained low, with Austria and Portugal that maintained a critical mass of 30% female ministers.

Figure 23: Comparison of government composition before and after elections



Last update: 2024 11 20

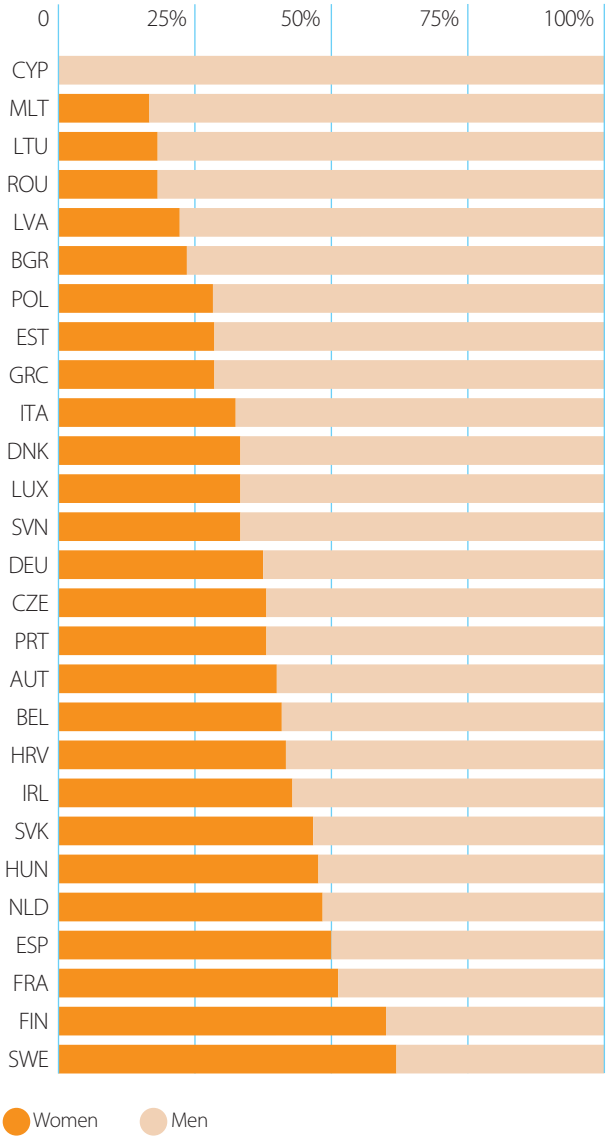
Source: UNESCO's own data collection based on countries' official data, 2024.

European elections in 2024

In June 2024, the European Union held elections for the 10th European Parliament (2024-2029). This represented one of the largest democratic exercises worldwide, involving approximately 358 million European citizens who cast their votes to elect 720 members of the new European Parliament.

The gender composition of the new European Parliament elected in June 2024 is shown in Figure 24. Women account for 278 members (38,66%) while men hold 441 seats (61,34%). In three out of five countries women secured more than 33% of the seats, with four countries achieving or surpassing gender parity in their parliamentary representation, namely Spain, France, Finland and Sweden, while 14% of countries have less than 20% female representation. Female leadership of the European Parliament presidency has been reaffirmed with Roberta Metsola continuing as president of the European Parliament and Ursula von der Leyen securing a second mandate as President of the European Commission.

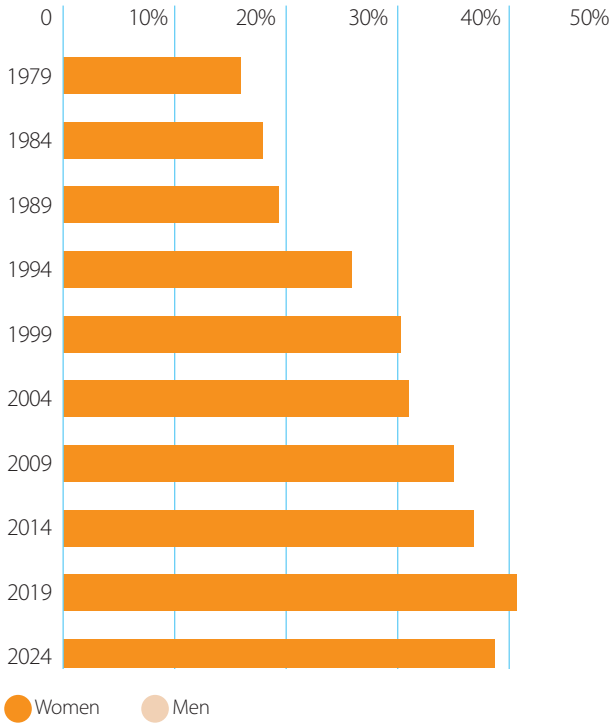
Figure 24: Gender distribution in the European Parliament 2024-2029



Source : Authors' own data collection based on European Parliament official data, 2024.

Over the past forty-five years, women's representation in the European Parliament has steadily increased with each election, reaching 30% in 1999 and continuing to grow, ultimately comprising 40% of the seats by 2019. By June 2024, this figure had slightly declined to 38.7%. While the previous European Parliament's female leadership had raised hopes of achieving 50% gender parity, results highlight the need to continue pursuing equal representation within Europe's highest institutions.

Figure 25: EPs' women's representation since 1979

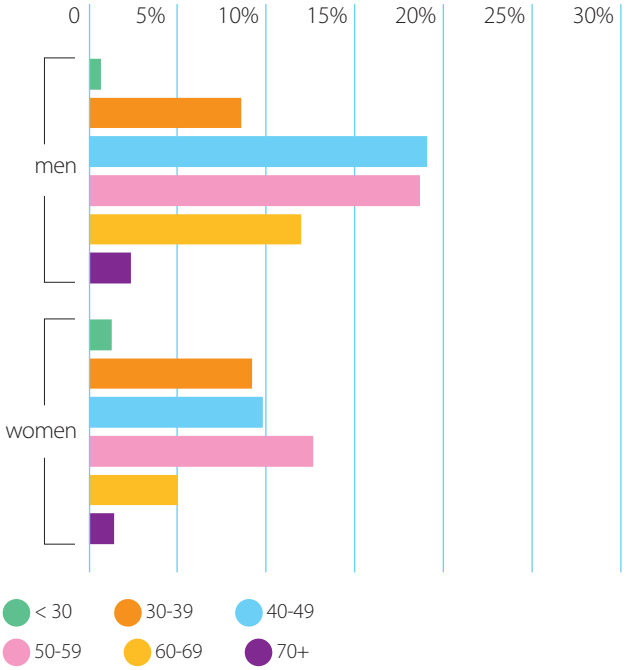


Source: Authors' own data collection based on European Parliament official data, 2024.

An analysis of the age and gender composition of the newly elected European Parliament reveals that the average age of female MPs is 48 years old, compared to 51 for male MPs. The youngest MP is a 23-year-old woman from Austria, and the oldest is a 77-year-old man from Italy.

Overall, young MPs under 30 make up less than 2% of the total, with women in this age group nearly doubling the number of men. The highest proportion of women (about 13%) falls within the 50 to 59 age range, followed by women aged 30 to 49, each representing about 10% of their respective groups. Women over 60 account for approximately 6% of MPs, with a very small share over the age of 70. In contrast, male MPs can predominantly be found in the 40 to 60 age range, representing 19% and 18%, respectively. Men over 70 are nearly three times as many as women in the same age group, and almost double the proportion of women above 70.

Figure 26: European Parliament 2024-2029 by gender and age



Source data: Authors' own data collection based on European Parliament official data, 2024.

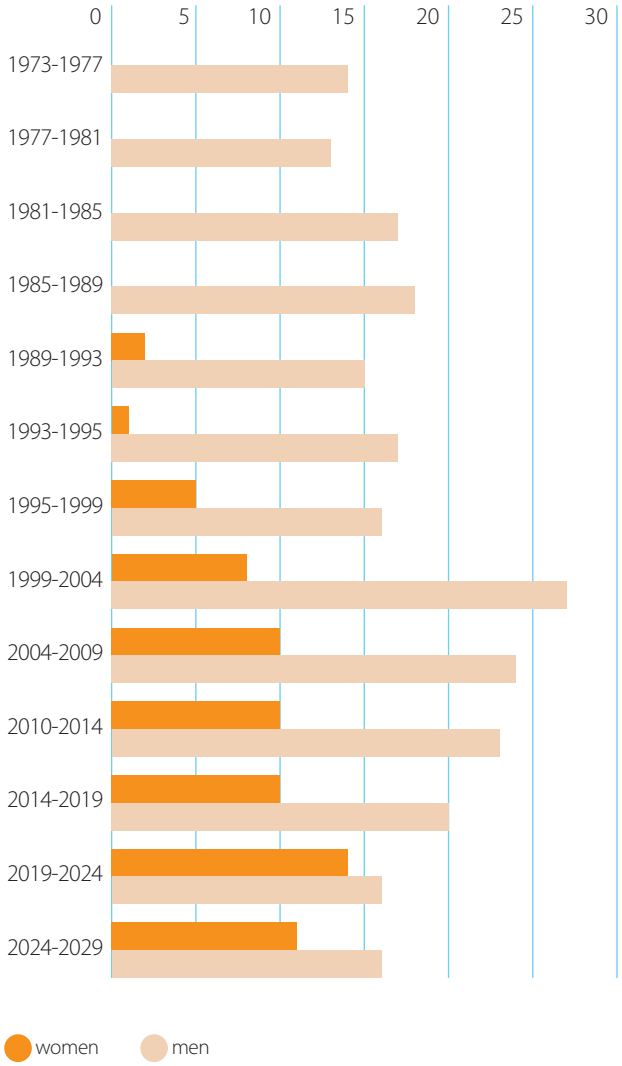
It was at the fourth Commission's cycle that the first female Commissioners were appointed in European Union, with Christiane Scrivener and Vasso Papandreou, appointed in the 1989-1993 European Commission under the Delors' presidency. In subsequent Commissions, Christiane Scrivener continued to serve alone with 17 men, with small improvements made under the presidency of Jacques Santer from 1995 to 1999. During the Prodi presidency, female Commissioners constituted about one-fourth of their male colleagues. In the following three cycles the number of women remained unaltered, at 10 members, but reached the critical mass of 30%.

The 2019 cycle marked a significant shift. When Ursula von der Leyen became the first female President of the European Commission, she requested Member States to nominate both a female and a male candidate for each position. This approach resulted in the Commission nearly achieving gender parity for the first time since 1977. However, notwithstanding von der Leyen's renewed appeal to Member States, the selection process for the 2024-2029 Commission resulted in the appointment of 11 women (including the President) and 16 men.

The 2024 renewal of the European Parliament and Commission saw a decline in both the number of women MPs and women Commissioners, despite female leadership in both institutions. This highlights the need to continue pursuing gender balance within the European Parliament and Commission. Women's

leadership alone is insufficient to ensure equal representation in European decision-making bodies. Proactive measures are required to address the male dominance in policymaking and to prioritize inclusion and diversity, ensuring that all voices are heard.

Figure 27: Women and Men in the European Commission since 1977



Including President, Vice Presidents and High Representative of the Union.
Latest update: 2024 11 29
Source data: Authors' own data collection based on European Commission official data, 2024.

Women's representation and democracy

So far, this report has argued that women's representation in policy making can be characterized following either a descriptive or a substantive representation. Descriptive representation, on the one hand, refers to having a relevant number of representatives that mirror ethnic, migrant, gender, or other relevant groups that are present in the reference population. Substantive representation, on the other hand, is a concept that underlines that elected representatives actively advance the interests of their group in the policy agenda. While the two are not mutually exclusive, descriptive representation is necessary, yet not sufficient on its own.

This chapter seeks to gather evidence on the relationship between women's political empowerment and the strengthening of democracy, with a focus on democratic principles, adherence to the rule of law and the reduction of political corruption. It explores how the combination of descriptive and substantive women's representation relates to democratic progress, leveraging the abundant evidence highlighting the existence of a strong and positive correlation between democracy and gender equality.

Women's political empowerment, in this context, encompasses a broad range of factors, including enhanced civil liberties, the ability to voice women's perspectives in society, and women's participation in decision-making processes. These factors align with UNESCO's gender-based resilience framework, which argues that, when women are empowered, they may act as catalysts for change, introduce new perspectives and ideas, foster innovation in both the political and economic spheres, and contribute to enhance prosperity and resilience (UNESCO, 2023a).

Data, model specification and results

To assess the relationship between women's representation and democratic progress, we use the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset (Coppedge et al., 2019). This expert-driven survey captures latent demographic phenomena through measures based on the judgments of over 4,000 experts. Each expert contributes at least five country-year observations, which are combined using a Bayesian Item Response measurement model. This model adjusts for experts' alignment with others, and incorporates additional controls, such as anchoring vignettes and cross-country coding, to ensure comparability across time and countries (Coppedge et al., 2020; Pemstein et al., 2018). The V-Dem dataset covers an extensive time series, from 1789, across up to 168 countries. For the present analysis, we focus on data about the 2023.

The key independent variable of our simple descriptive model is V-Dem's Women's Political Empowerment Index, which comprises three equally weighted sub-indices, considered one at a time. The first sub-index measures women's civil liberties, including property rights, freedom of movement within a country, and protection from forced servitude. The second sub-index gauges women's freedom to voice their interests, in both private and public spheres. The third sub-index assesses women's participation in political decision-making bodies.

Table 2: The independent variable and its sub-dimensions

Women Political Empowerment Index	
Sub - index	Indicators
Women civil liberties index	Freedom of domestic movement women Freedom from forced labour women Property rights women Access to justice women
Women civil society participation index	Freedom of discussion women Women's participation in civil society organisation Estimated percentage of women's journalist in the print and broadcast media
Women political participation index	Lower chamber female legislators Power distributed by gender

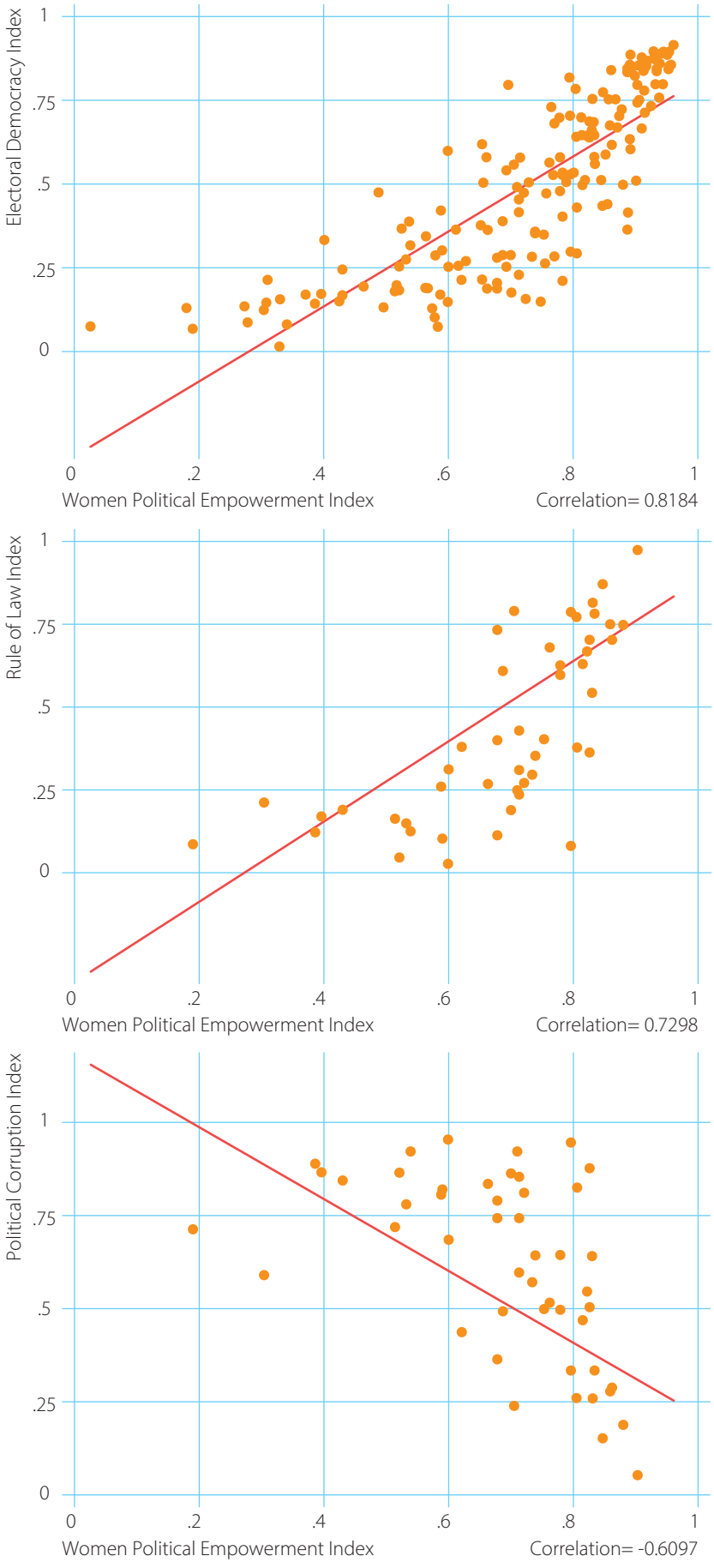
Source: Authors' own compilation based on V-Dem methodology.

The first dependent variable we use in the analysis is the V-Dem Electoral Democracy Index. This index encompasses the right to vote, the fairness of elections, and the conditions necessary for civil society to operate freely. It also includes freedoms exercised between elections, such as freedom of expression and the existence of independent media that can criticize political power without facing prosecution or persecution.

The second dependent variable is the Rule of Law Index, which assesses the transparency, independence, predictability, impartiality, and equality of laws, as well as the extent to which government officials adhere to them. This index proxies whether citizens are granted equal protection under the law and safeguards exist against arbitrary exercise of government power, so that political and civil rights are upheld.

The third and final dependent variable is the Political Corruption Index, which encompasses various forms of corruption across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government within the executive realm. It accounts for instances of bribery, embezzlement, as well as corruption aimed to influence law-making or policy implementation.

Figure 28: Association between women's political participation and electoral democracy index, rule of law and political corruption index in 2023.



Source: Authors' own analysis based on Von V-Dem data, 2023.

The bivariate analysis presented in Figure 28 reveals a positive and significant correlation between the Women's Political Empowerment Index on the one hand, and the Electoral Democracy Index and the Rule of Law Index on the other hand. This suggests that countries with higher levels of women's political empowerment tend to also exhibit relatively stronger democratic systems and greater adherence to the rule of law.

When examining the relationship between Women's Political Empowerment and the Rule of Law Index, more dispersed patterns emerge. Several countries fall below the regression line, indicating below-average scores.

Finally, the third panel in Figure 28 displays a strong and negative correlation between the Women's Political Empowerment Index and the Political Corruption Index, lending support to the argument that greater presence of women in policy making is linked to less corruption.

In addition to conducting the descriptive bivariate analysis above, we estimated a simple fixed effect Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model, with cluster standards errors by country across all three specifications. This was done to better assess the relationships above, while accounting for country-specific structural characteristics that are known to shape such dynamics. By doing so, we aim to avoid incorrectly attributing outcomes solely to women's empowerment, while they could conversely be the result of other factors. We also included region-fixed effects, to account for region-specific characteristics that may affect outcomes. Additionally, socioeconomic control variables were incorporated, such as GDP growth, to capture economic performance and the UN Human Development Index (HDI), to account for broader dimensions such as health, education, and living standards[14]. Lastly, we controlled for the presence of gender quota systems, to assess their relationship with women's political representation.

It is important to note that this analysis does not get at causal relationships, but rather seeks to identify robust, controlled correlations and to highlight statistically significant relations. Also, as several of our regressors are indexes, caution needs to be applied when interpreting the results, as some of the controls used can become non-significant because of (partial) multicollinearity – that is, when some of the variables are correlated among themselves.

Across the three models estimated, the Women's Political Empowerment Index appears to positively and significantly correlate with both the Electoral Democracy Index and the Rule of Law, whereas it exhibits a negative and significant association with the Political Corruption Index, as initially hypothesized based on existing literature.

Table 3: Fixed effect OLS regressions on Women's Political Empowerment Index and respectively Electoral Democracy Index, Rule of Laws and Political Corruption Index

	Electoral Democracy Index	Standard Error	Rule of Law Index	Standard Error	Political Corruption Index	Standard Error
Women political empowerment index	1.06***	(0.09)	1.14***	(0.13)	-0.75***	(0.13)
Gender quota	-0.01	(0.01)	0.01	(0.01)	0.00	(0.01)
GDP growth	-0.01***	(0.00)	-0.01***	(0.00)	0.01**	(0.00)
Human Development Index 2022	0.35***	(0.12)	0.87***	(0.18)	-1.16***	(0.19)
Region dummies	yes		yes		yes	
Constant	-0.47***	(0.07)	-0.80***	(0.10)	1.73***	(0.10)
Observations	160		160		160	
R-squared	0.793		0.700		0.649	

Level of significance: ***p < 0.01, **p < 0.05, *p < 0.1.

Source: Authors' own analysis based on V-Dem and World Bank data, 2023.

Note: UNESCO 's own analysis

14 The model specification is the following: $Y_{i,2023} = \beta_1 X_{1,i,2023} + \beta_2 X_{2,i,2023} + \beta_3 X_{3,i,2023} + \beta_4 X_{4,i,2021} + \alpha_i + u_{i,2023}$ for i=1,…,159 and represent the country observations considered. Where $Y_{i,2023}$ refers to respectively each independent variable, (namely Electoral Democracy Index, Rule of Law, and Political Corruption Index), $X_{1,i,2023}$ identifies the first independent variable (Women political empowerment index) for country i in 2023, $X_{2,i,2023}$ represents the second independent variable (Gender quota), $X_{3,i,2023}$ the third independent variable is GDP growth and the fourth one, $X_{4,i,2021}$ is the Human Development index measured in 2022. The betas are the estimated coefficients for each variable considered. α_i represents the country coefficient (the fixed effect) and $u_{i,2023}$ is the error term.

The simple analysis performed confirms that women's political empowerment may represent an important enabler of democracy and the rule of law. Moreover, the negative values of the intercepts in the first two models signal that when women's political empowerment is absent (i.e. when its value is zero), the predicted values for the Electoral Democracy Index and the Rule of Law Index are also negative, holding all other covariates constant. This entails that when women are not politically empowered, democratic governance and the rule of law are weakened.

Taken together, results underscore the pivotal role of women's political empowerment in enhancing democratic governance and upholding the rule of law.

To further elucidate these relationships, we built a dichotomized version of the dependent variables, assigning a value of zero for observations below the sample average and a value of one for those above. This approach allows to estimating average marginal effects and "quantify" how democracy and the rule of law increase, and corruption decreases the more women are politically empowered.

The analysis reveals that an increase in women's political empowerment is associated with a 52% higher probability of having an electoral democracy. The relationship is even more pronounced for the Rule of Law Index, where an increase in women's empowerment is linked to 57% improvement. Furthermore, the negative correlation between political corruption and women's political empowerment suggests that when women are empowered, there is a 46.8% reduction in corruption levels.

While, as previously mentioned, these results do not establish causal relationships, they nevertheless provide robust evidence that women's political empowerment enhances democracies and can significantly contribute to reduce political corruption. This supports the assertion that women's empowerment and political participation are not solely matters of justice, equity, or human rights for women themselves, but also have pragmatic, widespread and whole-of-society relevance in strengthening democracies. Enhancing institutional quality, promoting adherence to legal norms, and reducing corruption are all tangible outcomes resulting from greater women's involvement in policy- and decision-making. While increasing the number of women in decision-making roles is desirable – and can be expedited through the implementation of gender quotas – true gender-transformative resilience hinges on the substantive empowerment of women. This, in turn, would foster a systemic and sustainable leadership model whereby women can act as catalysts for democratic progress and anti-corruption initiatives.

Chapter 3.

Women in the labour market

The Brisbane target: objective and key indicators

At the 2014 Summit in Brisbane, under the Australian presidency, G20 leaders committed to the so-called Brisbane target, with the aim to reduce gender gaps in labour force participation by 25% by 2025. It was underlined that this would happen "*taking into account national circumstances*" and that this would translate in bringing *"more than 100 million women into the labour force*", to "*significantly increase global growth and reduce poverty and inequality*"[15]. In their G20 *Communiqué* delivered in Brisbane in 2014, leaders committed to boost economic growth and resilience, promote sustainability, and strengthen global infrastructures and institutions. Importantly, leaders acknowledge the need to not only create jobs, but quality employment opportunities.

Since 2014, under the G20 presidencies that followed, Ministers of Labour agreed upon a number of key principles furthering the 25x25 Brisbane target and expanded its scope, to include improvements in the quality of women's employment. In 2021, under Italy's G20 presidency, the G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target was launched, setting out pathways for achieving equal opportunities and outcomes for women and men, in both labour markets and societies at large. The Roadmap, building upon the gender equality plans introduced under the Australian (2014) and German (2017) presidencies, encompasses a comprehensive set of policy measures[16]. These include: (i) increasing the quantity and quality of women's employment; (ii) ensuring equal opportunities and achieving better outcomes in the labour market; (iii) promoting a more balanced distribution of women and men across sectors and occupations; (iv) tackling the gender pay gap; (v) promoting a more balanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men; and (vi) countering discrimination and gender stereotypes in the labour market. Furthermore, the Italian G20 presidency in 2021, proposed a set of indicators aimed to provide a clearer picture of progress towards achieving the 25x25 Brisbane target.

Table 4: Italian G20 Presidency set of indicators integrating the Brisbane target

Participation and Employment - Brisbane target (B)		
Indicator	Definition	Policy domain
B1. Gap in participation rates between women and men	Gender difference in labour force participation rate of persons aged 15-64	Increase quantity of employment of women
Auxiliary indicators (AB)		
AB1. Employment rate of women	Employment rate of women aged 15-64	Increase quantity of employment of women
AB2. Gender gap in part-time share of employment	Gender difference in share of employment in part-time work	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women
Job quality		
Earnings (E)		
E1. Gender gap in earnings (unadjusted)	Difference in median hourly earnings between men and women divided by the value for men	Tackle the gender pay gap
E2. Gender gap in low-paid work	Gender difference in share of workers earning less than 2/3 of median hourly earnings for all persons	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women and tackle the gender pay gap
Auxiliary indicators (AE)		
AE1. Factor-weighted gender gap in earnings	Gender gap in median hourly earnings adjusted for gender differences in individual characteristics	Tackle the gender pay gap
Labour market security (S)		
S1a. Gender gap in unemployment rate	Gender difference in overall unemployment rate	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women

15 https://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2014/2014-1116-communique.html
16 The respective gender equality plans refer to: G20 Policy Priorities for Boosting Female Participation, Quality of Employment and Gender Equity (Australia, 2014) , G20 Policy Recommendations to Reduce Gender Gaps in Labour Force Participation and Pay by Improving Women's Job Quality (Germany, 2017).

Participation and Employment - Brisbane target (B)		
S1b. Gender gap in long term unemployment rate	Gender difference in long term unemployment rate	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women
S2a. Gender gap in temporary work	Gender difference in incidence of temporary employment	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women
S2b. Gender gap in informal employment	Gender difference in incidence of informal employment	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women
Working conditions (W)		
W1. Gender gap in long hours of work	Gender difference in the incidence hours of work greater than 50 per week	Promote a more balanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men
W2. Share of women in managerial and leadership positions	Share of women employed in managerial and leadership occupations (ISCO-08 Group 1)	Promote a more even distribution of women and men across sectors and occupations
W3. Gender gap in self-employment	Gender difference in incidence of self-employment	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women and promote a more even distribution of women and men across sectors and occupations
W4. Employment gap for women associated with young children	Difference in employment rate between women aged 25-54 with and without young children	Promote a more even distribution of women and men across sectors and occupations
W5. Gender gap in time-related underemployment	Gender difference in incidence of time-related underemployment	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women
Auxiliary indicators (AW)		
AW1. Gender gap in time spent on unpaid care work	Gender difference in the total time spent in unpaid care work.	Promote a more balanced distribution of paid and unpaid work between women and men
AW2. Gender gap in very short hours of work	Gender difference in the incidence hours of work lower than 15 per week	Increase quality and quantity of employment of women

Source: G20 Italy 2021: https://g20.utoronto.ca/2021/G20-2021-LEM-Annex1_RoadmapBrisbane.pdf, 2021.

Linking indicators to specific policies objectives helps steering policy action, enables monitoring, may help enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the policies put in place, and ultimately allows assessing progress or lack thereof.

In what follows, the analysis tries to provide evidence in relation to all the indicators included in the G20 Roadmap, calculates the 25% reduction required in relation to the 2014 situation, i.e. the year in which the target was agreed, and analyses the results. To distinguish the results related to the Brisbane Target itself from those related to the indicators later introduced by the G20 Italian Presidency, we refer to the latter as target-related indicators.

Charting a more inclusive path: the political framework and current situation

Considering that G20 countries account for 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of global trade, and nearly two third of the global population (Agarwal and Topiwala, 2023), the G20 context represents a powerful forum when it comes to advocating for women's empowerment. Yet, the Brisbane target, and its 25x25 goal, is not the first global initiative aimed at increasing women's participation in the labour market.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, endorsed by 189 countries, remains the most comprehensive and transformative agenda to date aimed to achieve gender equality and empowering women and girls. Similarly, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, introduced in 2015, outlines 17 goals, one of which is specifically dedicated to gender equality.

In September 2024, Heads of State, government leaders, and high-level representatives convened in the context of the Pact for the Future Meeting - a summit aimed at forging multilateral agreements addressing emerging global challenges and leveraging existing opportunities. These include sustainable development, financing for development, international peace and security, as well as advancements in science, technology, innovation, and digital cooperation. Organized by the United Nations, this event brought together stakeholders from civil society, the private sector, academia, local and regional authorities, as well as youth representatives, among others. The goal was to collaboratively chart a path towards a safer, more peaceful, just, equal, inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future. Youth were recognized as essential to this transformation.

Once again, moving beyond «business as usual» and achieving tangible transformations towards a resilient and sustainable future requires ensuring gender equality, fostering women's empowerment and recurrently assessing progress, also towards the Brisbane target.

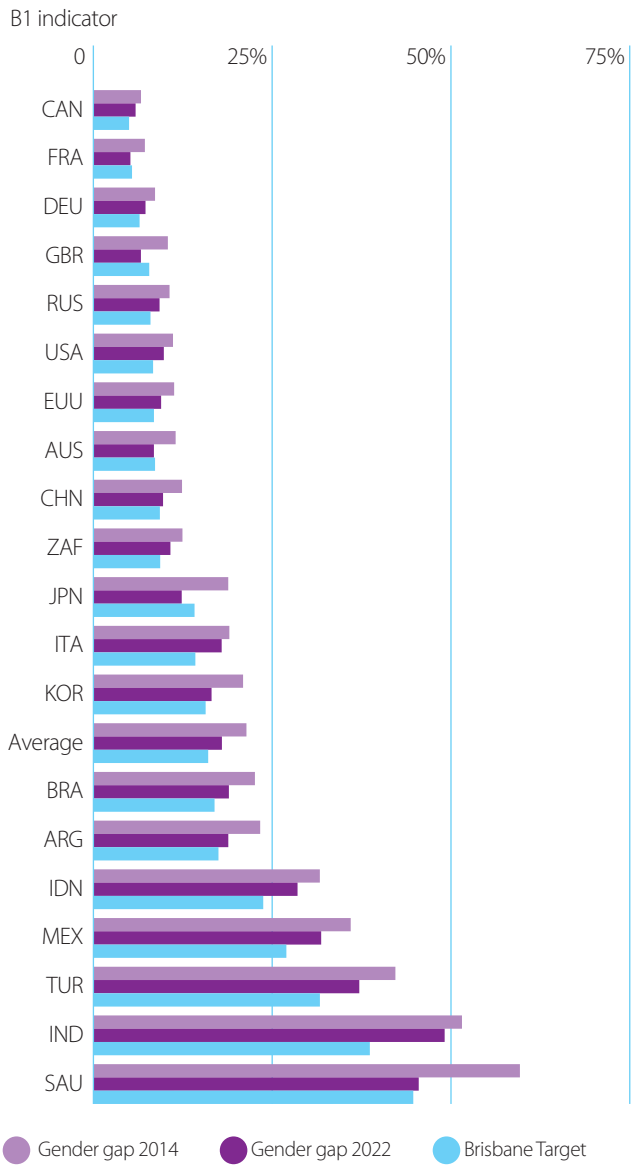
Progress in achieving the Brisbane target: women's participation in the labour market

The primary objective of the Brisbane 25x25 target is to narrow the gender gap in labour force participation among women and men of working age (15-64 years), across G20 countries.

Figure 29 illustrates the gender gap in labour force participation from 2014 to 2022 (the latest year for which data are available), vis-a-vis the Brisbane target. The data indicate that all G20 countries have made progress in increasing women's labour force participation. As of 2022, women's average participation in the G20 labour market stood at 61.6%, marking a rise of 3.7 percentage points on average since 2014, attesting the current gender gap at 18-percentage points, which is reasonably close to the Brisbane target gap of 16%.

In the following sections, the title of each graph displays the full name of the considered indicator, which is then represented on the y-axis. The label on the y-axis shows the indicator's code, as listed in Table 4, rather than repeating the full name.

Figure 29: Gap in participation rates between men and women (15-65 years old)



Gender gap calculated as difference between percentage of men and women in labour force participation (LFP) rate. The Brisbane Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the 2014 gender gap.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023.

Four countries — Australia, France, Japan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland — met and surpassed the Brisbane target, while five others – Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, China, Germany and Canada are nearing the Brisbane target, with gender gaps in labour force participation ranging between 6 percentage points and 9.7, among the last three countries, and respectively 45.5 and 16.5 percentage points for the first two. In nearly half of G20 countries, the gap between the 2022 figures and the Brisbane target is between 1 to 5 percentage points, except for India that exhibits a 10-percentage-point difference from the target.

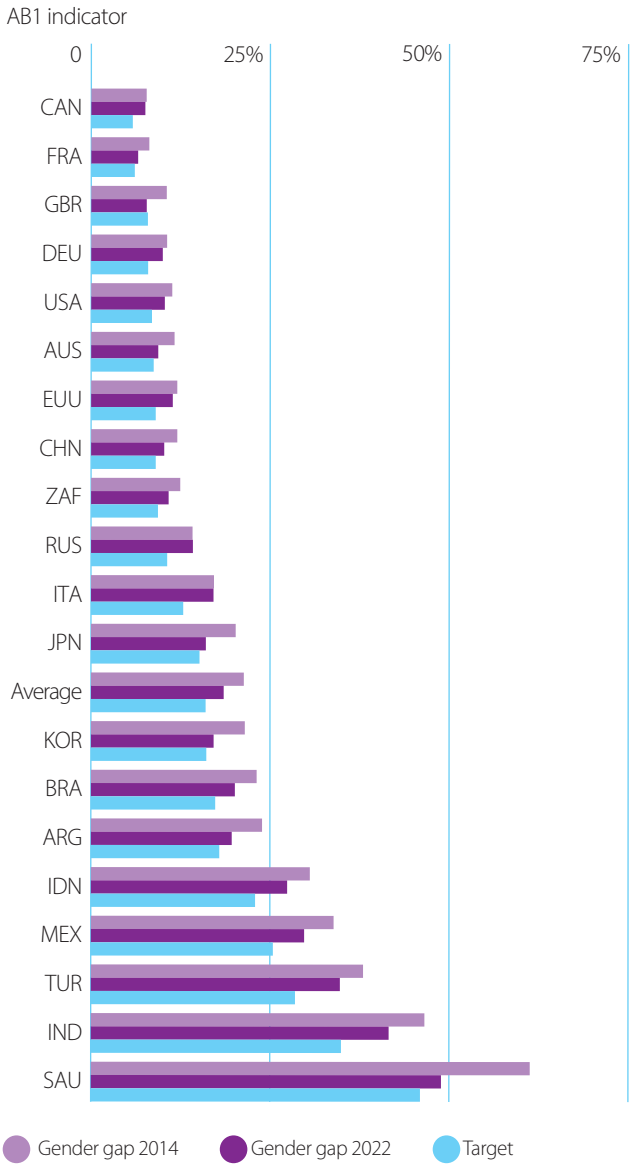
As can be seen, the majority of countries made significant progress to meet the Brisbane target, even if important differences in labour force participation rates emerge across G20 members. In countries such as Brazil, Italy, Argentina, and Mexico, women's labour force participation remains between 54.9% and 60%, which is on average 20 percentage point lower than that of men. In Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and India, the gender gap is between 37 and 49 percentage points. Among them, Saudi Arabia has made substantial strides, with women's labour force participation that has increased by 15 percentage points since 2014.

Results change slightly when analysing the employment rate differences between women and men where the gap to be narrowed to reach the Brisbane-related target is very close to that of the labour force participation in Figure 30. The labour force participation rate is the ratio between the total labour force divided by the total working-age population, whereas the employment rate is the extent to which people available to work are being employed. The concepts of labour force participation rate is similar to the one of employment rate, but differs from it as it includes people with a job as well as the number of people actively looking for work.

Gender gaps in employment vary importantly across countries: in 2022, Canada, France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland recorded the smallest gap, below 7 percentage points. These improvements brought these countries to meet and surpass the Brisbane-related target. At the opposite end of the spectrum, countries such as India, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye show relatively greater disparities, with India reporting a gap of 49 percentage points.

On average, by 2023, women's employment rate in G20 countries was 61.6%, as compared to 79% of men, i.e. 2 percentage points short of achieving the Brisbane-related target. Overall, between 2014 and 2023 the gender employment gap narrowed in most of the countries, although one third of countries made little progress, as can be inferred from Figure 30. In Italy and the Russian Federation, the gap remained almost unchanged, at 18 and 10 percentage points, respectively. Notably, progress was primarily observed in countries already close to the target (i.e. within one percentage point). Encouragingly, nearly half of the countries showed significant advancements toward meeting the sought Brisbane-related target.

Figure 30: Gender gap in employment rate (15-65 years old)



Gender gap calculated as difference between the percentage of men and women employed. The target is calculated as 25% reduction of the 2014 gender gap.

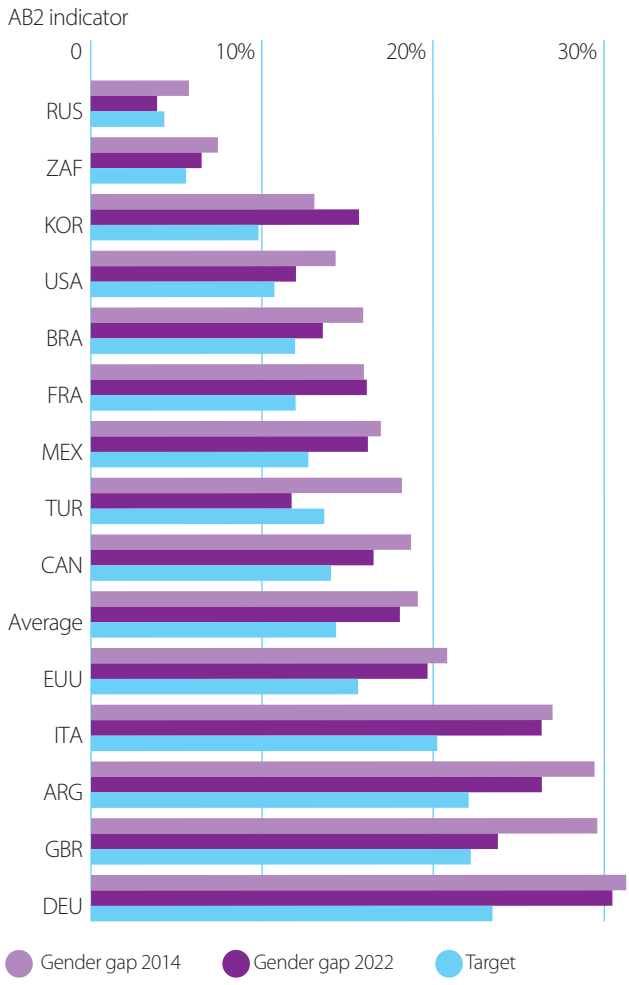
Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2024.

Saudi Arabia also exhibited remarkable progress, almost doubling the employment rate of women since 2014 – which brought the country close to achieving the Brisbane related-target. Japan too exhibited significant improvements, with 53% of women employed in 2023, an increase of ten percentage points over the last nine years in absolute terms, corresponding to a reduction of 13.6 relative percentage points.

Progress in relation to the quality of women's employment

The data further reveal a disproportionate prevalence of part-time employment for women compared to men (Figure 31). On average, the gender gap in part-time work in G20 countries is 18 percentage points, in absolute terms. While part-time employment can provide flexibility, and can be valuable for work-life balance, it is often associated with lower pay and limited career progression opportunities. Over time, this can also result in lower pension contributions, which may negatively impact women's financial security (Milner, 2024).

Figure 31: Gender gap in part-time work



Gender gap calculated as difference between men and women in part-time jobs. The target is calculated as 25% reduction of the 2014 gender gap

Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2024.

To promote gender equality in employment, narrowing this disparity to a 14-percentage-point gap by 2025 is a key goal. Important variations across countries emerge, with the smallest gender gap in part-time employment observed in the Russian Federation and South Africa, where absolute differences are 4 and 6.5 percentage points, respectively. By contrast, some countries with relatively positive overall employment conditions for women, such as Germany, Argentina and Italy, exhibit high levels of part-time work among women (60%, 55.3% and 50%, respectively). This highlights the importance of addressing part-time employment disparities as well as broader employment conditions.

As illustrated in Figure 31, nearly all countries made significant progress in reducing the gender gap in part-time work since 2024. Among the most notable performers, Türkiye almost halved its gender gap, bringing it down to 28 percentage points in relative terms in 2023, while Argentina reduced its gap by 4 percentage points, in absolute terms, lowering its gap to 10% in relative terms. However, some countries have seemingly struggled to make substantial improvements. For example, in the Republic of Korea, the distance between women and men in part time work worsened by 2.7 percentage points since 2014, corresponding to an increase of 12 percentage points in relative terms, arriving at a 5-percentage-point distance from the Brisbane-related target.

The Russian Federation and Türkiye are the only countries that met and went beyond the Brisbane-related target, with respectively 3.8 and 11.7 percentage point absolute gaps, in relation to part-time work. Brazil, South Africa, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America are most likely to achieve the Brisbane-related target in 2025, each being within 1 to 1.6 percentage points from the goal already in 2023. However, the countries furthest from the target remain between 4 to 7 percentage points behind it, in absolute terms. Yet, there is hope the Brisbane-related target may be met by 2025.

In this first part of the analysis, focusing on labour market participation and employment, findings indicate that women continue to remain at the margins of the labour market. On average, in countries for which data are available, women's labour force participation is 22.6% lower than men's, leaving a gap of 4 percentage points from the Brisbane-related target. These disparities are even more pronounced in employment rates: women's employment averages 28% less than men's across G20 countries. Additionally, part-time work remains disproportionately undertaken by women, who, on average, are 82% more likely than men to be employed in part-time roles.

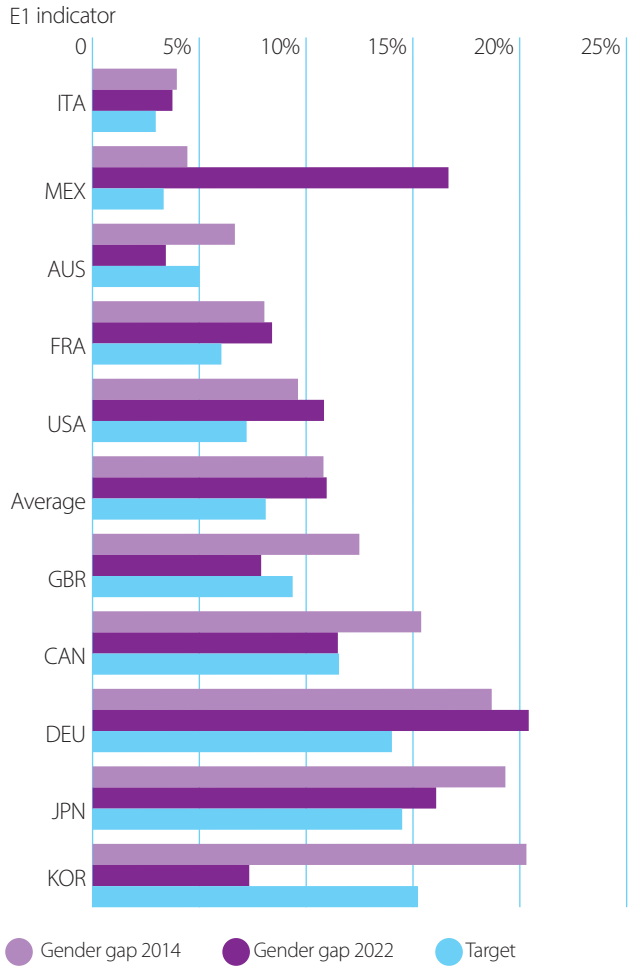
These statistics underscore the persistence of systemic inequalities that disproportionately affect women, posing significant challenges to achieving the Brisbane-related target and progressing towards gender parity in labour market participation.

Job quality

Job quality can be assessed in relation to a number of components. The analysis that follows focuses on earning and, in particular, on the gender wage gap, on labour market security and on working conditions, as shown in Table 5.

Earning inequalities between women and men can be assessed in terms of unadjusted wage differences relative to men's earnings at the bottom, median and top deciles of the income distribution. Findings reveal (Figure 32) substantial variations across countries and income levels.

Figure 32: Gender wage gap at the bottom earnings (1st decile)



Gender wage gap is the difference between the 1st decile earnings of men and of women. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD data, 2024.

Figure 32 shows that, among lower earners, women earn between 3.7% less than men (in Australia and Italy) and as much as 20% less (in Germany). On average, the gender pay gap for lower earners across G20 countries is 11%. Encouragingly, some countries have displayed notable improvements at the lower end of the earnings scale since 2014. For instance, in the Republic of Korea, the gap narrowed significantly from 20.3% in 2014 to 7.3% in 2023. Similarly, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the gap reduced by four percentage points to 8 over the same period.

In some countries the situation nevertheless worsened. In Mexico, the gap among lower earners widened substantially, with women earning 4.4% less than men in 2014 compared to 16.6% less in 2023. Germany also experienced a slight increase in the gender pay gap, rising from 18.6% in 2014 to 20.4% in 2023.

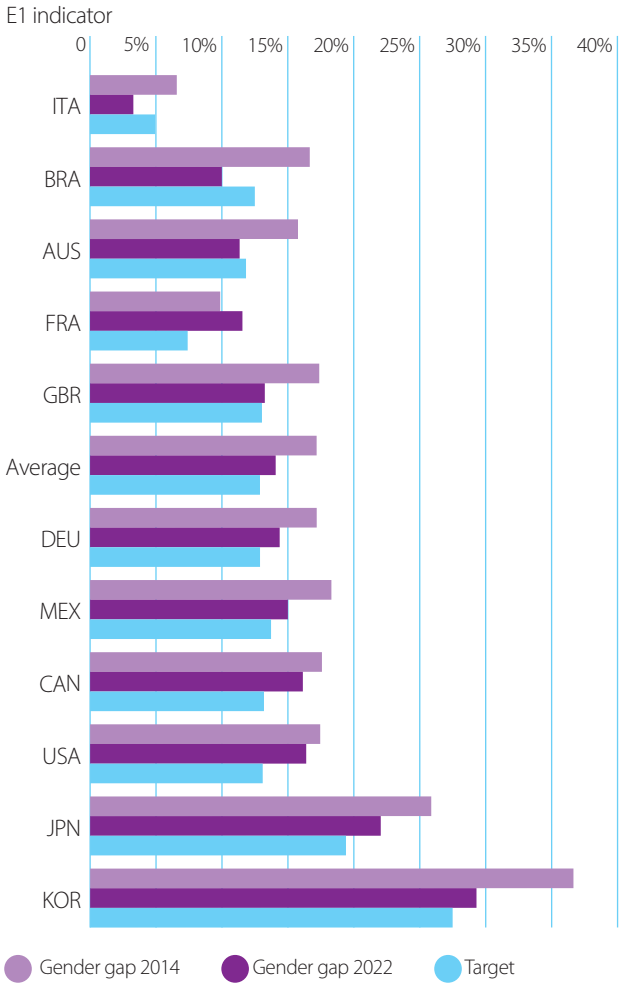
In terms of progress towards the Brisbane related-target the Republic of Korea, Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland met the target and even went beyond it by, respectively, 8, 1.6 and 1.5 percentage points difference compared to the target. Canada met the target, with 11.5 percentage difference absolute gap, followed by Italy, Japan France, and Australia which are very close to meet the goal. By contrast, the majority of remaining countries still fall behind by approximately 2 percentage points compared to the target.

The gender pay gap in median earnings, shown in Figure 33, presents a different picture compared to the disparities observed at the lower end of the earnings scale. Across all countries for which data are available, progress has been made to reduce the gender pay gap since 2014, though the pace of improvement varies. On average, women in G20 countries earn 14% less than men, marking a 3-percentage-point improvement since 2014.

Among the countries exhibiting the largest reductions, the Republic of Korea and Brazil have narrowed their gender pay gaps by 7 and 6 percentage points, respectively. Nonetheless, disparities persist. Women in Brazil continue to earn 10% less than men, while the Republic of Korea records the widest gap at 29.3%. Italy exhibits the lowest gender pay gap at median earnings levels, and has reduced gaps from 6.6% in 2014 to 3.3% in 2023. In 2023, other notable reductions were observed for Australia (11.34%), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (13.3%), Japan (22%), and Mexico (15%).

In terms of progress towards the Brisbane-related target, Australia, Brazil, and Italy, showed to have reached and bypassed the goal, positioning themself at respectively 0.5, 2.5 and 1.6 percentage points beyond the target. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland followed by Mexico and the Republic of Korea are the countries closest to achieving it. In contrast, almost one-third of countries still lag behind when it comes to the difference between the 2023 gender pay gap and the Brisbane-related target, by 2 to 4 percentage points.

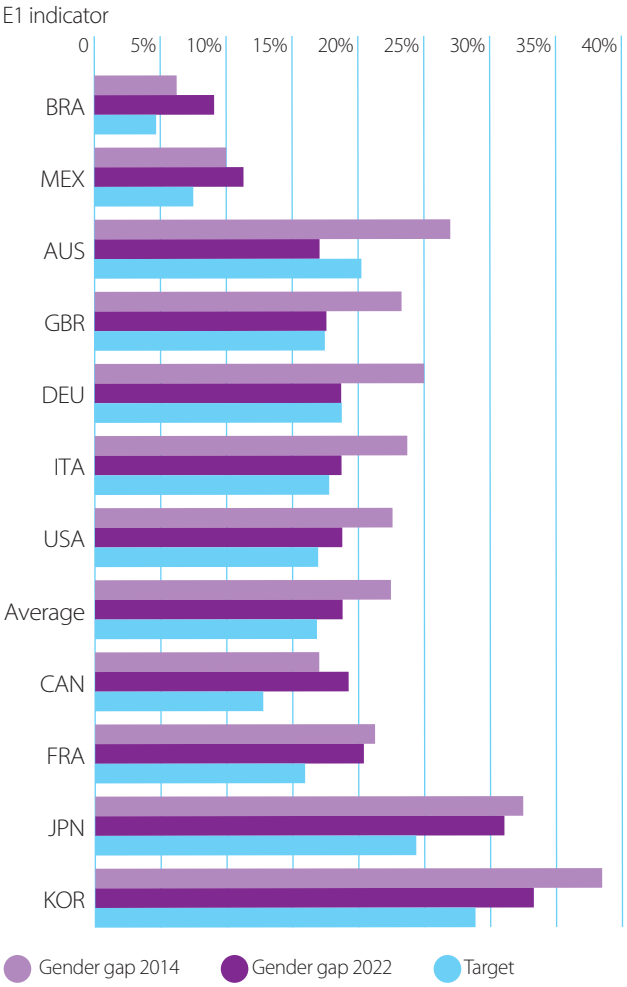
Figure 33: Gender wage gap at the median earnings



Gender wage gap is the difference between the median earnings of men and of women. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD data, 2024.

Figure 34: Gender wage gap at the top earnings (9th decile)



Gender wage gap is the difference between the 9th decile earnings of men and of women (top earning). The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD data, 2024.

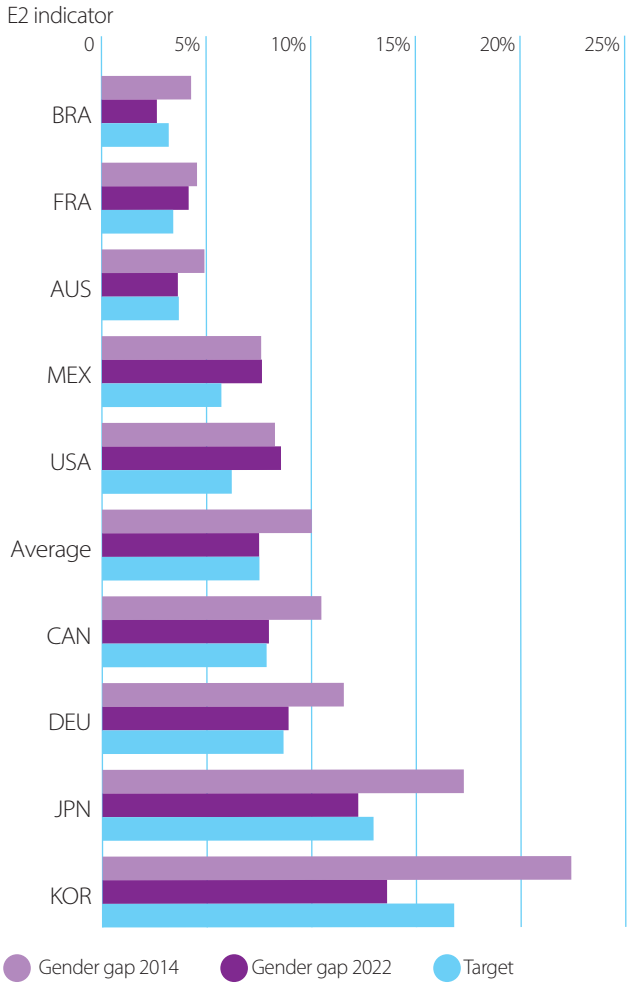
The analysis of the gender pay gap among top earners reveals greater disparities than those observed in the case of median or low-income earners (Figure 34). As in previous cases, important variations across countries emerge. With the exception of three countries, all countries reduced the gender pay gap at the top over the past nine years. Despite this, on average, women in the countries considered earn 18.8% less than their male counterparts, leaving them 2 percentage points short of achieving the Brisbane-related target. Among the countries that have progressed the most in narrowing the gap there are Australia (17.1% in 2023), Germany (18.7%), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (17.6%) and Italy (18.7%). One third of countries succeed in achieving the Brisbane-related target, namely Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (and Italy is very close). These countries set a precedent for others to follow.

The last indicator of the G20 Roadmap related to job quality is the gender gap in low-paid work (Figure 35). The incidence of low-pay work is defined as the proportion of workers earning less than two-thirds of median earnings.

In 2023, data from all countries for which data are available, indicate that the absolute difference between women and men attested at 7.5 percentage points, which entails having met the Brisbane-related target. Half of the countries met and even went beyond the target, while remaining countries are up to 2.3 percentage points from the target. Brazil, Japan and the Republic of Korea stand out, with Japan and the Republic of Korea that reduced their gender employment gaps by 5 and 8.8 percentage points, respectively, between 2014 and 2023, surpassing the Brisbane-related target.

In summary, the Brisbane-related target related to earnings has been achieved almost in all countries for which data are available. Women nevertheless remain marginalized in the labour market, with employment rates that are 28% lower than those of men. They are disproportionately concentrated in low-paying jobs, and remain 1.5 times more likely than men to hold such positions in G20 countries. Additionally, women are 82% more likely than men to be employed in part-time roles, which exacerbates the gender pay gap. In 2023, women earned on average 14% less than men, with disparities widening among top earners, where women earned 18.8% less than their male counterparts.

Figure 35: Gender gap in low-paid work



Gender differencelow-paid work is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

Note: Data refer to full-time employment. This indicator is measured as a percentage of full-time workers.

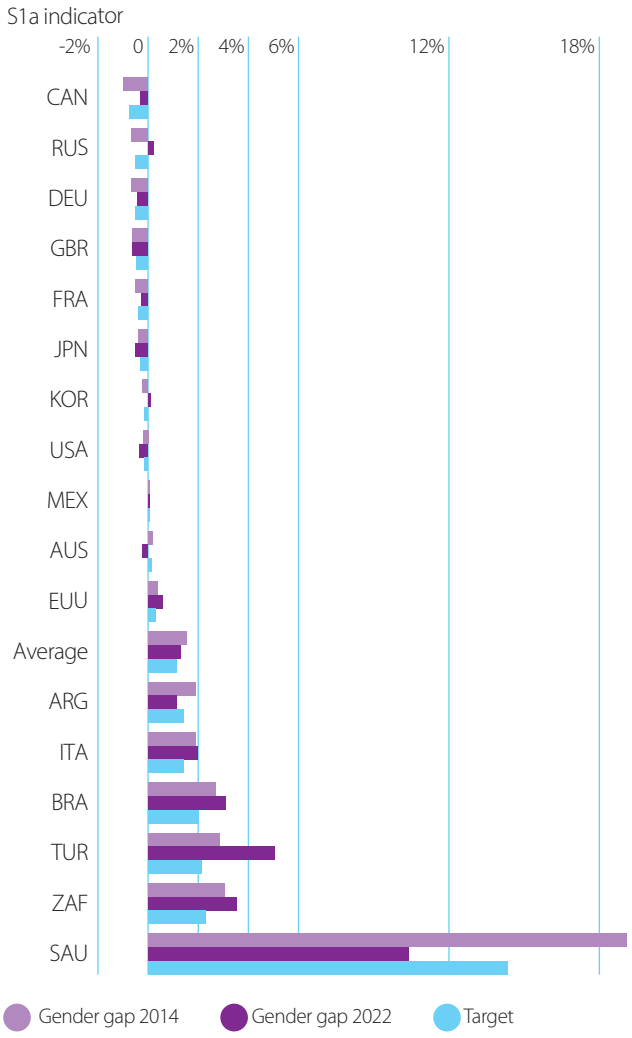
Labour market security (S)

This dimension refers to labour market security, with the first indicator analysed being the gender gap in the unemployment rate. This indicator serves as a proxy for the underutilization of female labour supply, reflecting an economy's inability to generate sufficient employment opportunities for individuals willing and available to work.

Results show important cross-country variations, and two main groups emerge, as shown in Figure 36. The first group includes countries with negative gender gaps, indicating that women are slightly less likely to experience unemployment, with the gap within 1 percentage point in absolute terms. Within this group, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Korea reversed the gender gap in 2023 by registering a slightly higher percentage of women unemployed (with a 2023 gender gap respectively of 0.22 and 0.08 percentage points in absolute terms). Canada, France and Germany met the Brisbane-related target while the remaining countries - despite seeing a widening of the gender gap in 2023 - are still close to meeting the goal by a magnitude that does not exceed 0.8 percentage points difference from the 2023 gender gap.

The second group includes countries such as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, the European Union, Italy, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Türkiye where women are more likely than men to be unemployed. Within this group, Saudi Arabia stands out: the gender gap in the unemployment rate decreased significantly, from a 19-percentage-point difference in 2014 to 10.4 percentage points in 2023, surpassing the Brisbane-related target of 14.3 percentage points. Argentina also showed remarkable progress, reducing the gender gap below the target, with a 2023 female unemployment rate of 6.8% compared to 5.6% for men. Meanwhile, other countries moved further away from achieving the target.

Figure 36: Gender gap in the unemployment rate



Gender difference in unemployment rate is calculated as absolute difference between women and men (National estimates). The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

The long-term unemployment rate measures the duration of unemployment, focusing on unemployed individuals who have been without work for one year or longer. This indicator is particularly important as it highlights the diminishing employability of jobseekers — the longer someone remains unemployed, the lower their chances of getting employed again. This issue is especially relevant for women, who often face greater exclusion from the labour force due, for instance, to family and caregiving responsibilities.

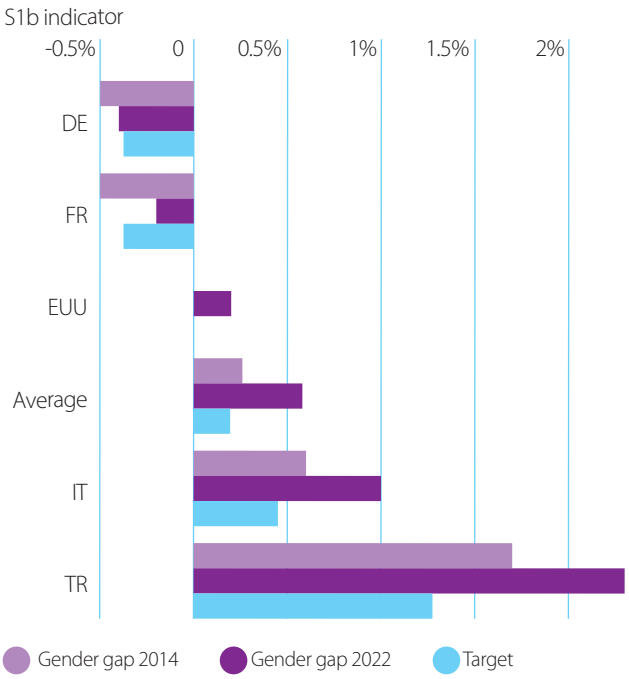
Gathering consistent data on long-term unemployment rates across all G20 countries is challenging, as such data are available for only a limited number of countries. This might depend on several reasons, including the fact that long-term unemployment rate may not be harmonized across countries, even though most countries collect this information. Despite this, the results shown in Figure 37 reveal a clear divide between countries where women are less likely to experience long-term unemployment and those where they are disproportionately affected by it.

In both France and Germany, men exhibited higher long-term unemployment rates than women in 2014 and 2023. Over time, the gender gap narrowed in both countries, bringing Germany close to meeting the Brisbane-related target and enabling France to meet it, further reducing the gender gap beyond the target.

Conversely, in countries where women are more likely to experience long-term unemployment, the gender gap has widened. In Italy, the gap grew by 0.4 percentage point in absolute terms over the past nine years with women in long-term unemployment being 26.3% more than men in 2023, compared to 7.5 % in 2014. Despite this, overall female unemployment rate in Italy has nearly halved, decreasing from 8.6% in 2014 to 4.8% in 2023. In Türkiye, the gap continued to widen reaching 35% increase in relative terms since 2014.

Finally, on average, within the European Union (EU-27), long-term unemployment rates have declined substantially, dropping from 5.4% for both women and men in 2014, to 2.2% for women and 2% for men in 2023.

Figure 37: Gender gap in long-term unemployment rate



Gender difference in long-term unemployment rate is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

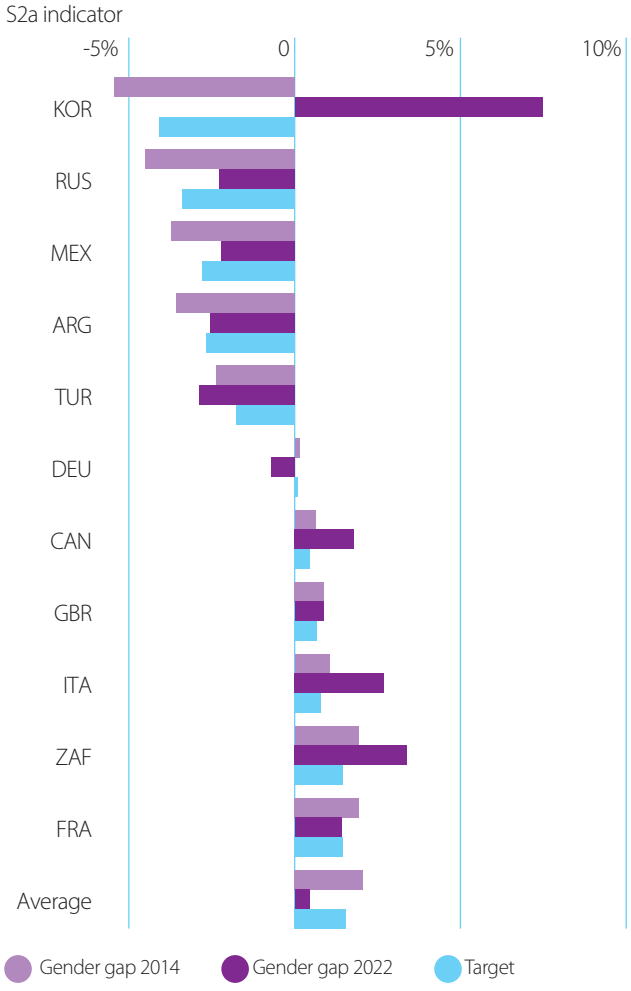
Source: Authors' own compilation based on Eurostat data, 2024.

Temporary employment refers to work arrangements where employees are engaged for a specific period (e.g. fixed-term project- or task-based contracts,

seasonal or casual work). It is measured as a percentage of dependent employees (wage and salary workers). While such arrangements provide flexibility, they are also associated with higher levels of insecurity.

Figure 38 shows that, on average, across the countries for which data are available, the gender gap in temporary employment reduced from 2 in 2014 to 0.45 percentage points in absolute terms in 2023 exceeding the Brisbane-related target Yet, notable differences among countries emerge. While in Argentina, Germany, Mexico, Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and Türkiye, there are less women represented in temporary employment, an opposite pattern can be observed in the case of the other countries.

Figure 38: Gender gap in temporary employment rate



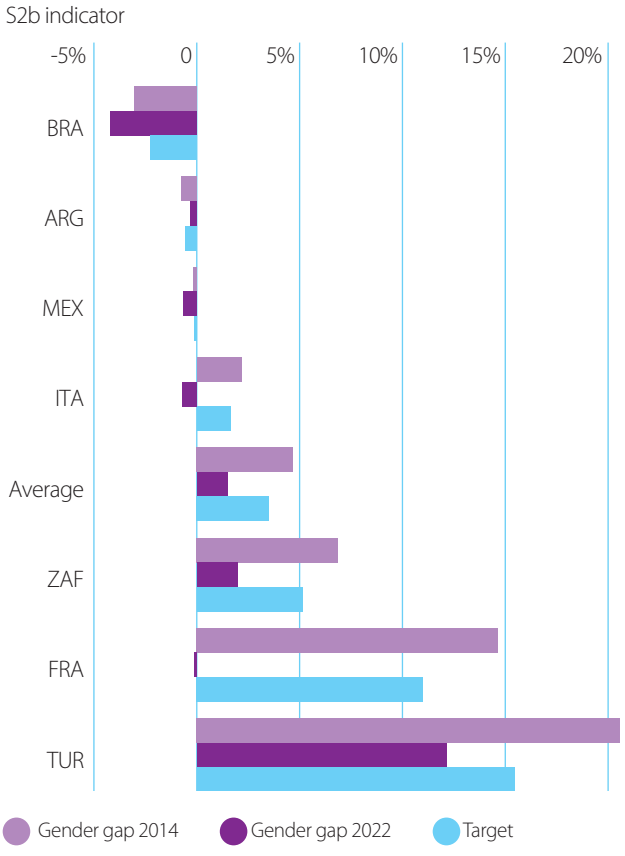
Gender difference in temporary employment rate is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

Over the past nine years, women in the Republic of Korea reduced their participation in temporary work from 84% in 2014 to 25% in 2023, becoming the most present in this type of working arrangement. This has flipped the direction of the gender gap which changed from –5.5 in 2014 to 7.5 percentage points in absolute terms. In other cases, such as the Russian Federation and Mexico, the gender gap has narrowed in 2023, going beyond the Brisbane-related target by, respectively, 1.1 and 0.6 percentage points. Argentina almost met the target in 2024. Türkiye's gender gap widened from 2014 to 2023, reaching –3 percentage points. In Germany, women went from being the least to the most represented in temporary work over the past ten years.

Among the countries where women are more engaged in temporary work, France is the only one meeting the Brisbane-related target. Since 2014, the gender gap progressively widened in Canada, Italy and South Africa, respectively to 1.7, 2.7 and 3.4 percentage points in absolute terms. While these figures can be compared in percentage terms, it is important to note that the overall situation for women in South Africa reflects greater efforts to increase their participation in the labour market and a different starting point, as compared to Canada and Italy. At the same time, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has not shown significant changes over the past decade, but remains very close to the target.

Figure 39: Gender gap in informal employment



Gender difference in informal employment is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

Informal employment refers to working arrangements that, either by practice or by law, are not covered by national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection, or other employment guarantees. The literature is still debating whether informal employment represents a strategy of last resort to escape involuntary unemployment or is a voluntary choice of workers, based on income and utility maximization (Günther and Launov, 2012). In addition, there are important challenges related to measurement of informality, due to infrequent production or non-compliance with international standards (Gardner et al., 2018). Yet, engendering informality statistics is paramount to understand how labour market (in) security affects women and men.

As shown in Figure 39 women in informal employment, on average, exceed men with a gender gap of 1.5 percentage point in absolute terms that narrowed by 3 percentage points over the last nine years. Out of the seven countries for which data are available, most of them have made significant progress in reducing the gender gap over the past nine years. For instance, in France, 34% of women were in informal employment compared to 19.3% of men in 2014. By 2022, this share had dropped significantly to approximately 4% for both genders, with men showing a slightly higher percentage. Italy followed a different pattern: although it reduced its gender gap from 2 to 0.7 percentage points since 2014, in 2022 men were more likely than women to work in informal employment. This was the opposite of 2014, when women were more likely to be engaged in informal employment.

In South Africa, while the informal employment rate remained above 40% for both women and men in 2022, women were slightly more likely to be in informal employment. This represents a significant reduction since 2014, and beyond the Brisbane-related target. In Türkiye, in 2014, 50% women were engaged in informal employment, a share reduced by 24 percentage in 2022, thus bringing the country well beyond the Brisbane-related target. Finally, Brazil is the only country where the gender gap increased in 2022, while remaining 1 percentage point away from the target.

Data on informal employment remain scarce and scattered, especially in relation to migrant workers, who often face significant risks in regions with large informal sectors and weak health and safety regulations. (IOM, 2021). In this context, informal workers are the most vulnerable and often exposed to health risks, injuries at work, sexual abuse, or human trafficking (IOM, 2021). Gender differences might also influence health outcomes. While men are more likely to die or be injured at work due to their concentration in dangerous jobs (IOM, 2021), migrant women face distinct health challenges, including mental health issues, reproductive concerns, and types of occupational injuries (IOM, 2021). In female-dominated sectors like domestic work, risks are heightened by long hours, heavy lifting, and exposure to hazardous chemicals. Women living in employer's homes are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and social isolation (IOM, 2021). However, more data are needed to track these trends and provide evidence-based recommendations.

To summarize, the indicators related to the subdomain of labour market security discussed so far, paint a promising picture. In 2023, on average, unemployed women outnumbered men by 7%, a figure that is very close to the Brisbane-related target. However, these data hide significant cross-country variability. Monitoring both unemployment and long-term unemployment provides insight into a country's ability to offer employment to those seeking it. The longer unemployment lasts, the harder it becomes to re-enter the labour market. On average in 2023, the long-term unemployment rate of women and men halved since 2014, while nevertheless remaining far from meeting the Brisbane-related target. It is important to note that collecting data on this indicator is challenging because harmonised data are hard to find, often due to low data quality or infrequent data production. This explains the limited number of countries represented in the analysis and why this report can only provide a partial view of long-term unemployment within G20 countries.

Among those employed but facing high job insecurity, temporary workers make up just over 15% of dependent employees, with women being slightly more likely than men to be in this type of employment. The last indicator monitored is informal employment, which, in low-income economies, often serves as a survival strategy in the absence of safety nets like unemployment insurance. However, it can also involve illicit activities, including drug trafficking and human trafficking. Based on available data, in 2022, women were 3.5% more likely than men to be involved in informal employment. Yet, this data conceal significant differences across countries, with men typically more involved in informal activities in most countries. Türkiye stands out, for significantly reducing the gender gap in informal employment, enabling the country to exceed the Brisbane-related target.

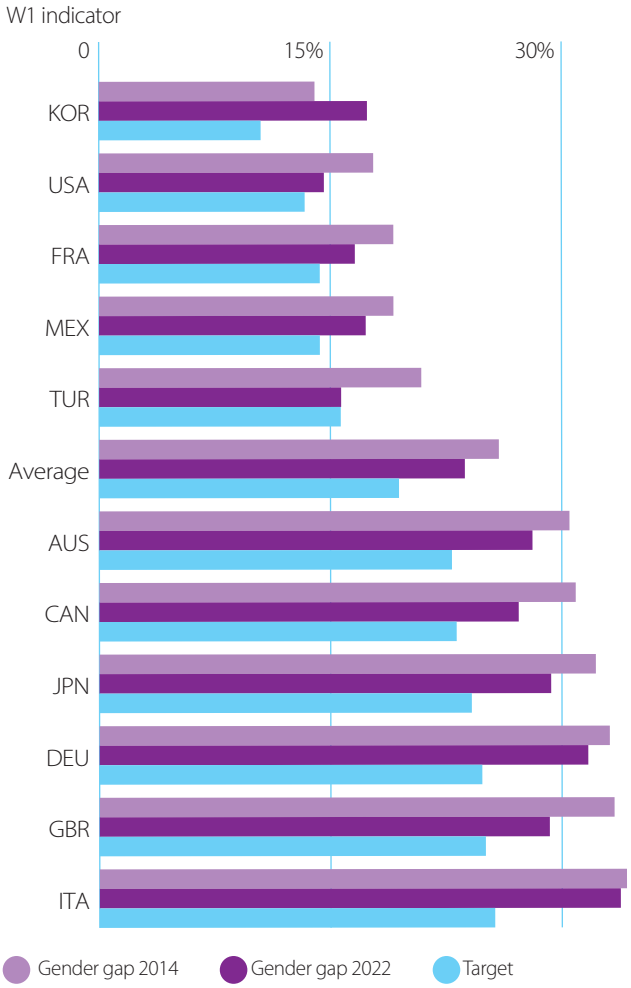
Working conditions (W)

The last dimension considered refers to working conditions, which draws a picture of an unbalanced workload between women and men in paid and unpaid work. The first indicator analysed is the gender gap in long hours of work, as shown in Figure 42. Academic research reveals a correlation between excessive working hours and poor health outcomes such as alcohol consumption, smoking, lack of exercise (Ahn, 2016) as well as cardiovascular disease or stroke related to inadequate physical exercise (Kivimäki et al., 2015).

Results provide an interesting picture in the comparison between 40 or more hours of work and 35-39 working hours. In the first case (Figure 40), in all countries for which data are available on average in 2021 women worked longer than 40 hours 34.5% less than men. This trend has not changed much since 2014. Australia, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are among the countries with the lowest share of women engaged in long working hours, with a gender gap in 2021 ranging between 16 percentage points in France and 31.7 in Germany, with no country meeting the Brisbane-related target. Among the 11 countries analysed, Türkiye is the only country that met the target, but 85% of men and 70% of women work longer than 40 hours per week.

France, Mexico and the United States of America stand out as they display the smaller gender gaps in both reference years considered, and remain on average at less than 2 percentage point from the Brisbane-related target. The Republic of Korea and Italy have widened the gap, with differences of 7 and 8 percentage points, respectively, in absolute terms, while in the remaining countries' gaps stayed almost unchanged.

Figure 40: Gender gap in long hours of work (40 hours and above per week)



Gender difference in long hours of work is calculated as difference between men and women. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the 2014 gender gap.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD Family Database, 2022.

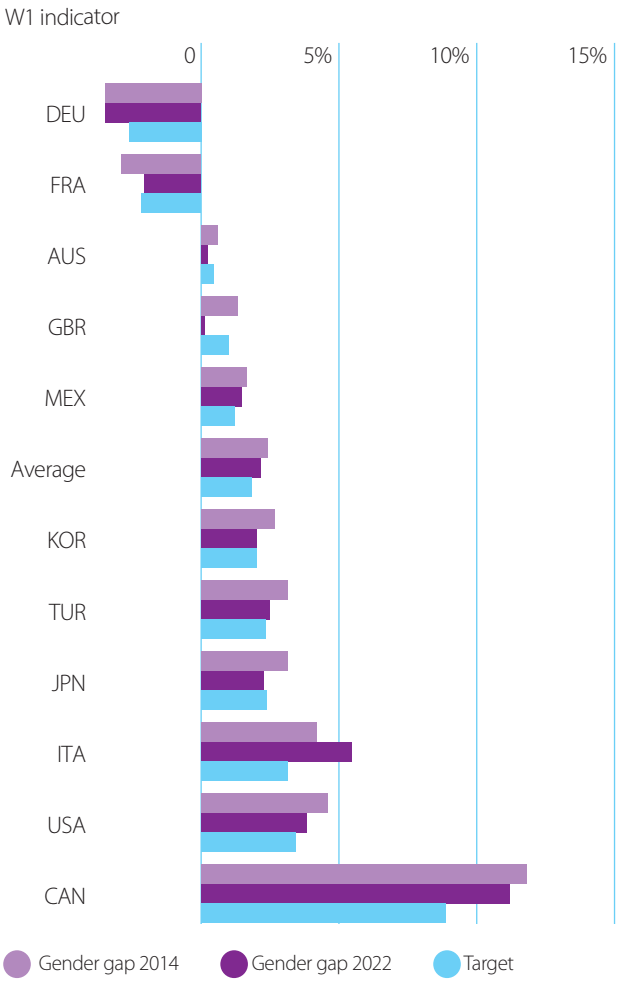
Notes: For Australia, Japan, Korea data refer to all jobs rather than the main job, for Japan and Korea data refer to actual weekly working hours rather than usual weekly working hours, and for the United States of America data refer to those in dependent employment only.

A completely different picture emerges from the analysis of working hours between 35 to 39 hours per week. Germany and France are characterised by a relatively low proportion of women in working activities occupying between 35 to 39 hours. As for the rest of countries, Australia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland successfully met the Brisbane-related target and went beyond it. Yet results show a slightly higher percentage of women working between 35 to 39 hours per week. In the remaining countries, almost all reduced the gap since 2014. Japan, followed by Mexico, the Republic of Korea and Türkiye are among those who reduced it the most and where women are respectively 29.7%, 25.7%, 39.7% and 69% more present than men in this working arrangement. Yet, they managed to meet or almost meet the target.

Canada recorded the highest gender gap in the weekly 35-39 working hours category, amounting of 11 percentage points followed by Italy with 5.4 percentage points in 2021, the widest distances from the Brisbane-related target.

Results from both graphs evidence how, in the countries analysed, women tend to be less represented in long working hours, and more represented in the 35-39 weekly hours' working range. Given that this is about paid work, and despite the fact that long working hours are unhealthy, it should be recalled that women shoulder most of the burden of unpaid care and domestic work (UNESCO, 2023a). This means that, overall, women likely continue to work longer hours than men, without necessarily getting paid for this.

Figure 41: Gender gap in 35-39 hours of work (35-39 hours per week)



Gender difference in long hours of work is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD Family Database, 2022.

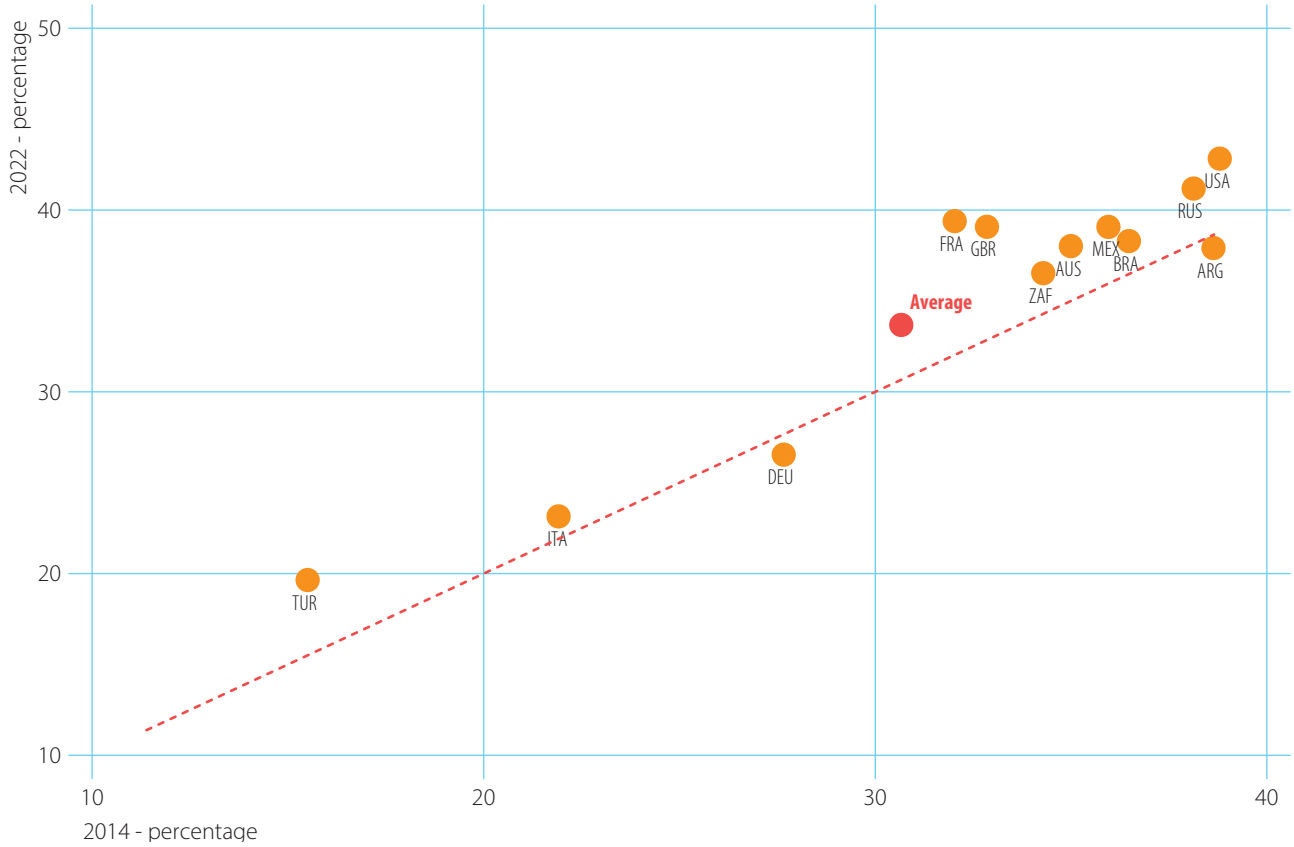
Notes: For Australia, Japan, Korea data refer to all jobs rather than the main job, for Japan and Korea data refer to actual weekly working hours rather than usual weekly working hours, and for the United States of America data refer to those in dependent employment only.

The next indicator analysed is the share of women in senior and middle management positions, as shown in Figure 42. Since 2014, the share of women in these roles has increased, though improvements have been marginal. On average, across countries for which data are available, women held 33.7% of senior and middle management positions in 2022, reflecting a 3-percentage-point increase since 2014.

Argentina and Germany are the only countries where the proportion of women in these positions has slightly decreased over the past eight years, now standing at 37.9% and 26.5%, respectively. On the other hand, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have seen the largest gains, with increases of 6 to 7 percentage points, bringing their shares up to 39.4% and 39%, respectively.

The Russian Federation surpassed the 40% threshold in 2022, with an increase of 3 percentage points since 2014. The United States of America also surpassed the 40% threshold in 2022, with an increase of 4 percentage points since 2014. Türkiye saw a significant increase from 15.5% in 2014 to 19.6% in 2022. In contrast, Italy continues to have one of the lowest shares of women in senior and middle management positions, at 23%, with only a slight increase since 2014.

Figure 42: Share of women in senior and middle management positions (%)



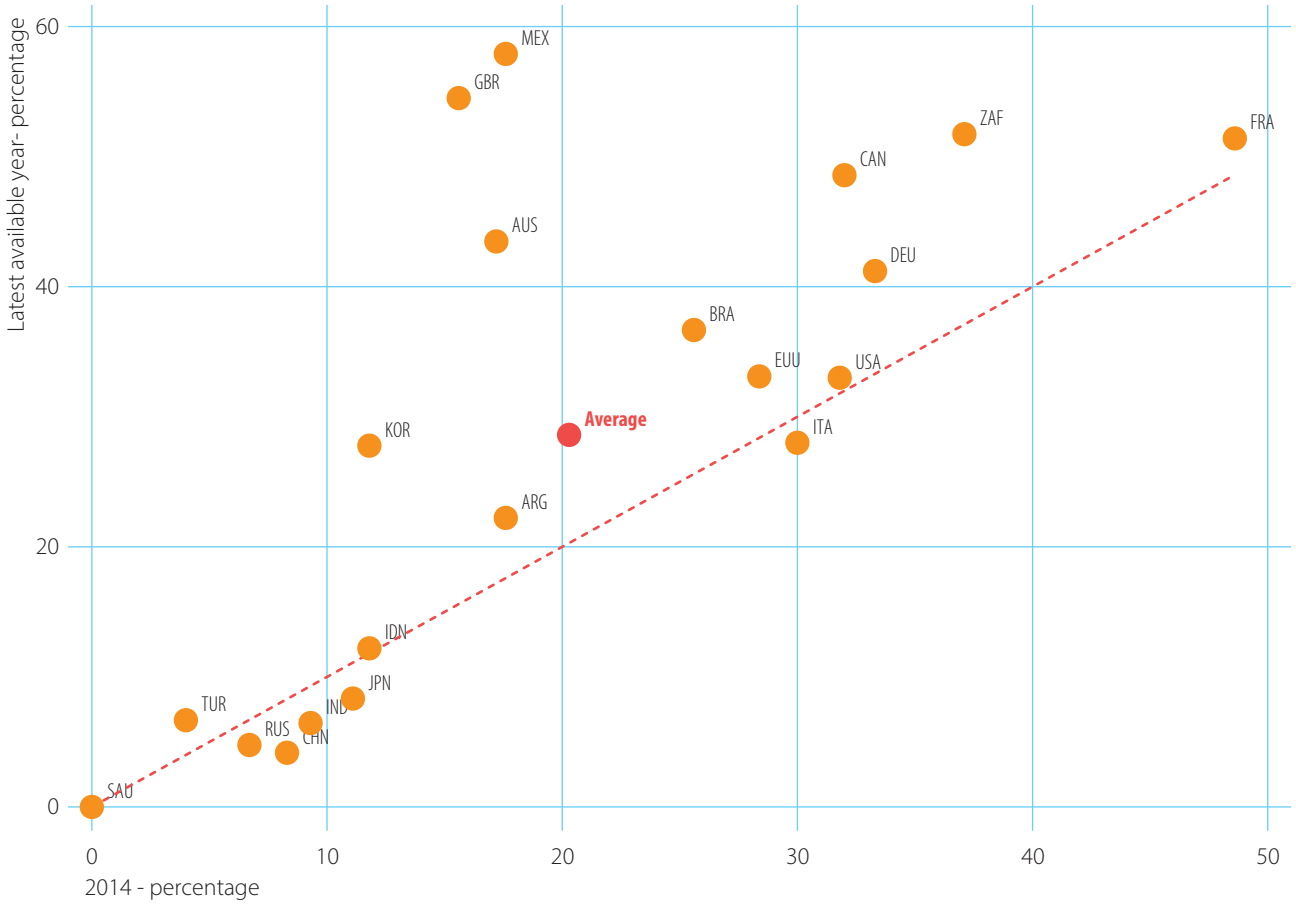
Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023.

Women's leadership in decision-making is also reflected by the number of women holding ministerial-level positions, which includes deputy prime ministers, prime ministers, and heads of government who hold ministerial portfolios, while excluding vice-presidents and heads of government agencies. In 2024, data for a subset of countries for which information is available, show that, on average, women held 28% of ministerial positions, marking an increase of 8 percentage points since 2014 (Figure 43).

This average, however, conceals significant cross-country variations. Mexico ranks the highest, with women holding 57.9% of ministerial positions in 2024—a 40-percentage-point increase since 2014 which marks the highest progress among the countries considered. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, South Africa, and France follow closely, with respectively 54.5% and 51.7%, 51.4% of ministerial roles held by women with a progress ranging from 38.9 percentage points of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to 2.8 percentage points of France since 2014.

In contrast, Italy has seen a slight 2-percentage-point decrease in the share of women in ministerial positions with 28% of women holding ministerial positions in 2024, in a country nevertheless led by a female Prime Minister. Besides, Türkiye recorded an increase of 2.6 percentage points since 2014.

Figure 43: Share of women in ministerial-level positions (%)



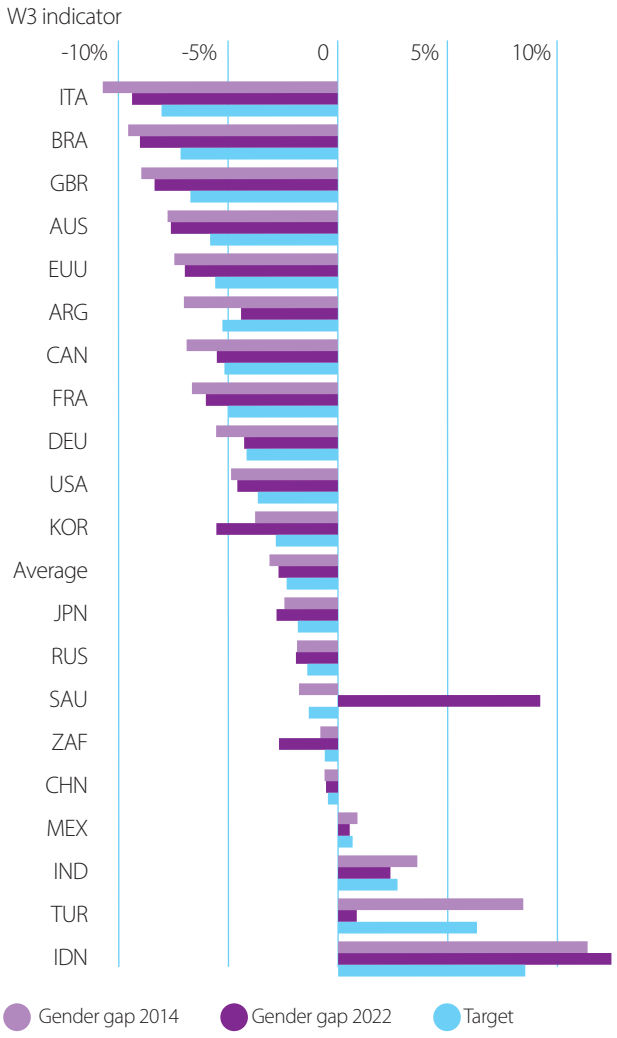
Source: Authors' own compilation based on own data collection on 2024 elections, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Statistics Database, and World Bank data, 2024.

Note: latest available year refers to: Germany (2024), France (2024), United Kingdom(2024), Italy (2024), Argentina (2024), Australia (2024), Indonesia (2024), India (2024), Republic of Korea (2024), Mexico (2024), The Russia Federation (2024), Türkiye (2024), South Africa (2024), Brazil (2022), Canada (2022), China (2022), Japan(2022), Saudi Arabia (2022), United States of America (2022).

When analysing data on self-employment among women and men in G20 countries, results show that, on average, women were 10% less likely than men to be self-employed in 2022. In Figure 44 two groups emerge. The first group includes the majority of countries, with women that are less likely than men to be self-employed, and the gender gap narrowing only slightly in 2022, compared to 2014. The widest gaps were recorded in Australia, Brazil, Italy, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, with a gender gap that ranges between 6.7 and 8 percentage points in absolute terms. Even though most countries in this group reduced their gender gap since 2014, in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and South Africa such gap widened importantly over the last ten years, amounting to, respectively, 2.8, 5.5, and 2.6 percentage points in absolute terms. Yet, countries such as Argentina, China and Germany met the Brisbane-related target already in 2022.

The second group includes countries with a greater percentage of self-employed women. Saudi Arabia stands out with a reversal, whereby in 2022, women were three times more likely than men to be self-employed, compared to 2014 with 1.48% of self-employed women and 3.26% of men. Türkiye appears to have made the most significant progress in reducing the gender gap, narrowing it by 7.6 percentage points since 2014, with women now 3% more likely to be self-employed. China and Mexico have the smallest gender gaps, with women being 1% and 1.6%, respectively, more likely than men to be self-employed.

Figure 44: Gender gap in self-employment



Gender difference in self employment is calculated as absolute difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2023.

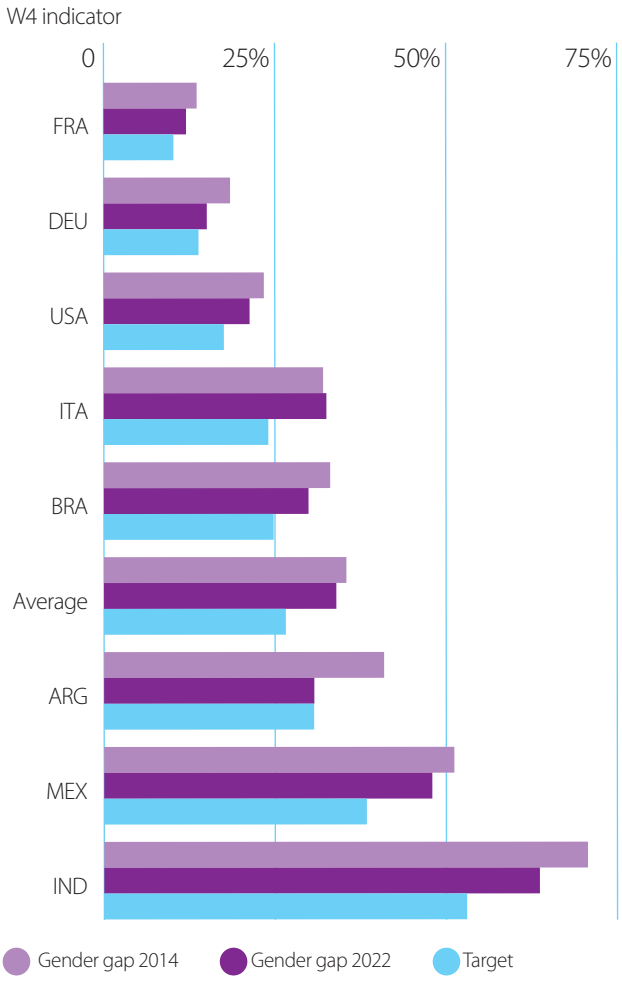
The employment gap in couples with children under six years of age offers some insights into the division of labour in the family (Figure 45). On average, across countries for which data are available, mothers are 36.7% less likely to be employed than fathers. Over the past nine years, this gap has not narrowed much, remaining at an absolute distance of 7.4 percentage points from the Brisbane-related target. However, this average masks significant differences between countries. The largest gap is seen in India, where, in 2022, mothers in couples with children under six worked 65.7% less than fathers. Mexico follows, with a gender gap of 48 percentage points, although it narrowed by 10 percentage points since 2014.

Argentina has seen the most significant reduction in this gap since 2014, and the country has met the Brisbane-related target in 2022, although Argentinian mothers in 2022 were still employed 32.4% less than fathers in similar situations.

Italy and Brazil are close to the average, with mothers being 36.6% and 33% less likely than fathers to be employed, respectively, in families with children under six. Among the countries with the smallest gender gaps, France stands out, with mothers employed 13% less than fathers. This is followed by Germany at 16% and the United States of America at 23%.

Since the main activities for adults with young children revolve around work and caregiving, this indicator sheds light on who may take on primary family responsibilities and reveals an unequal distribution of both paid and unpaid work.

Figure 45: Employment gap in couples with children aged less than six years old



Gender difference in temporary employment rate is calculated as difference between men and women. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

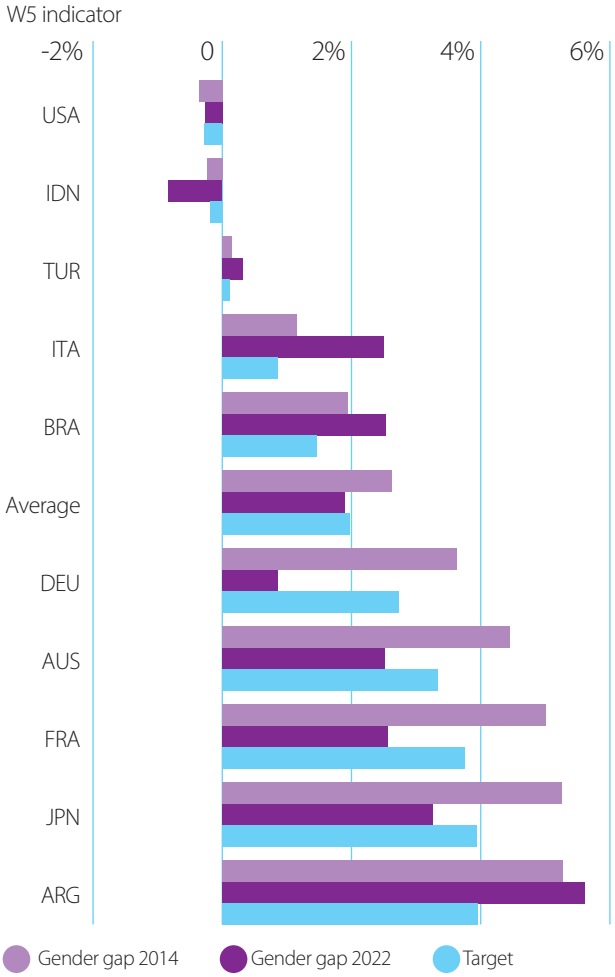
Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

The time-related underemployment rate measures labour underutilization by capturing the share of employed individuals who are willing and available to work more hours but are working fewer than specified thresholds during the reference period. This indicator highlights inadequate employment and complements other measures of labour slack, such as the unemployment rate and potential labour force. Time-related underemployment statistics are valuable because they offer a more comprehensive view of labour market efficiency and gender biases, especially when analysed alongside employment and unemployment data.

While the unemployment rate is the most commonly used indicator to assess labour market performance, this indicator alone does not offer a full understanding of the market's dynamics. Low unemployment rates may mask the fact that many workers are underemployed — working fewer hours, earning lower incomes, underutilising their skills, and being less productive than they could or would like to be. These underemployed workers often compete with the unemployed for better job opportunities. A clearer picture of labour force underutilization can be obtained by considering both the underemployed and unemployed as a share of total labour force.

Results in Figure 46 show that, in 2022, 6.2% of women versus 4.3% of men were underemployed, on average, across the countries for which data are available. This represents an improvement from 2014, when the gap was 2.6 percentage points difference, and a success, as this implied that the Brisbane-related target was already met in 2022.

Figure 46: Gender gap in time-related underemployment (15-64 years old)



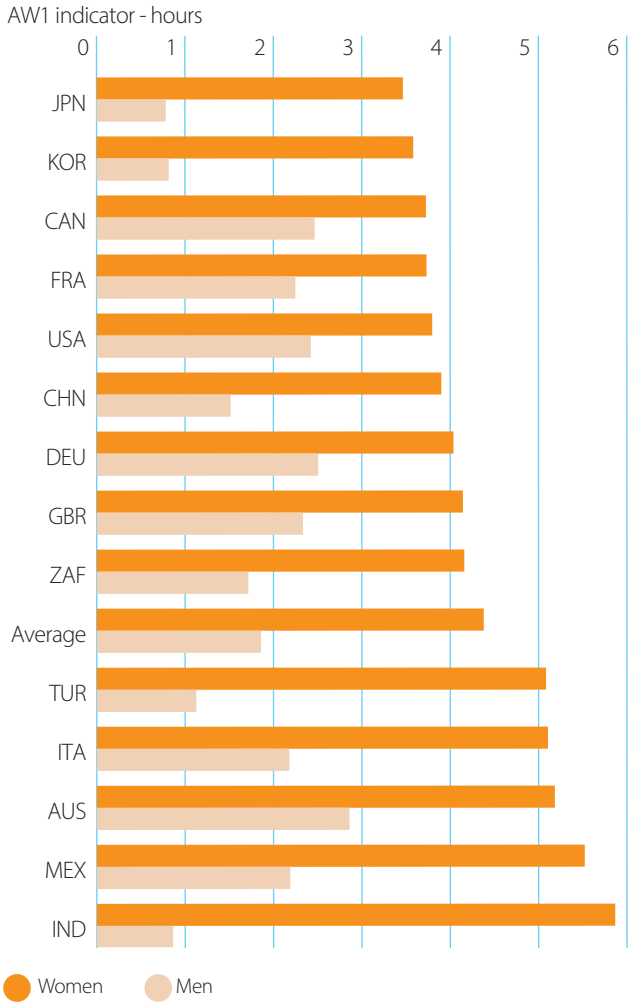
Gender difference in temporary employment rate is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ILO data, 2024.

The data show significant cross-country variability though. In some countries, women are less likely than men to be underemployed. For example, in the United States of America, the gender gap reduced enough to meet the Brisbane-related target. In India, women were 13.4% less likely than men to be underemployed in 2022, though the gap has worsened since 2014, increasing from a difference of 0.24 to 0.83 percentage points in absolute terms. A larger group of countries sees women more likely than men to experience underemployment.

Australia, France, Germany, and Japan conversely experienced important reductions in gender gaps since 2014, allowing them to largely meet the Brisbane-related target. In Germany, the gender gap narrowed from 6.6% of women being underemployed in 2014 to 1.8% in 2022. Australia, France and Japan followed similar patterns, with gender gaps of 2.5 percentage points in both Australia and France, and 3.6 percentage points in Japan in 2022.

Figure 47: Gender gap in time spent on unpaid work (hours per day)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD Times use survey database, 2024.

Note: age of reference is 15-64, or if difference it is reported in parenthesis; years of reference changes country by country: Japan (2021), Republic of Korea (2014), Canada (2015), France (2009/10), United States of America (2022), China (2008, age of reference 15-74), Germany (2012/2013), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2014/2015), South Africa (2010), Türkiye (2014/2015), Italy (2013/2014), Australia (2006, age of reference 15 and more), Mexico (2014), India (1998/99).

Unpaid care work refers to providing services within households or for other households and community members, without financial compensation. This work involves activities that directly support the well-being of others, require time and energy, and often arise from social or contractual obligations, such as marriage or informal social relationships.

The economic value of unpaid work is estimated to be between 10% and 39% of global GDP, yet it is not included in GDP calculations (Antonopoulos, 2009; United Nations, 2017). Despite being excluded from national accounts and decision-making processes, unpaid care work significantly contributes to household welfare, often at the expense of women's active participation in economic, social and political life. This is a valid reason to keep a sharp focus on this indicator and to improve the timeliness and accuracy of its measurement.

The time spent on unpaid work directly influences the type, duration, and availability of paid employment a person can pursue. As a result, it limits access to social security benefits and, since it offers no monetary compensation, it diminishes the ability to participate in decision-making, accumulate savings, or build assets. Moreover, in many societies, unpaid care work is predominantly seen as a woman's responsibility, carried out in the private sphere of the family. This perception strips the work of its socio-economic significance and undermines its valuable contributions.

Although unpaid work is recognized as a key factor in addressing gender equality and is included as an indicator for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.4.1), measuring it primarily depends on time-use surveys, which are both costly and complex to conduct. As a result, the reference years for this indicator vary, and there is currently no consistent time series available, making it difficult to assess progress toward the Brisbane-related target.

Figure 47 shows data from 14 G20 countries, where, on average, women spend 2.5 times more time on unpaid care work than men. In these countries, women dedicate between 3 to 5 hours per day to unpaid work, which is 4.4 to 6.7 times more than men. The countries

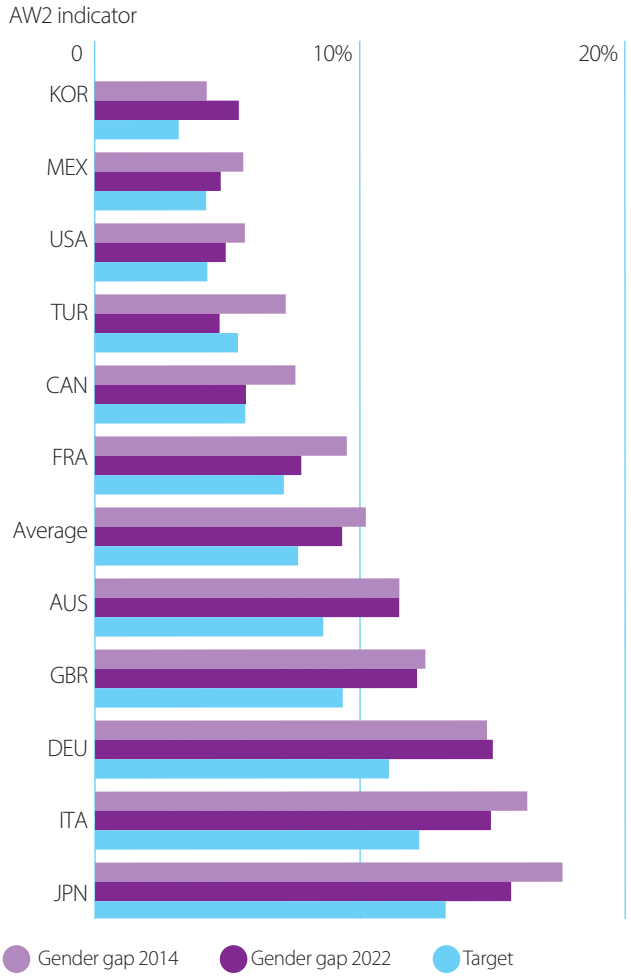
where women spend the most time on unpaid work are India, Mexico, Australia, Italy and Türkiye, where women average five hours per day spent in such tasks. The highest amount of unpaid work done by men is around two hours per day, with Australia leading, followed by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. In contrast, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea exhibit wide gender disparities, with men spending less than fifteen minutes per day on unpaid care work, while women in these countries work between 4 and almost 7 times more, respectively.

The last two indicators of the G20 Roadmap focus on the gender gap in short working hours. In 2021, data show that across all countries considered, women are disproportionately engaged in working 20-29 hours per week, with 14% of women working in this arrangement versus 5.5 % of men, on average (Figure 48). In the last ten years, this gap modestly decreased, thus remaining far from the Brisbane-related target.

In nearly all countries, the gender gap has narrowed since 2014, although there is significant variation between countries, reflecting their unique circumstances. Among the countries where the gap widened since 2014, Germany and the Republic of Korea are respectively 4 and 2.6 percentage points away from the Brisbane-related target. The gender gap in Australia and Canada remains unchanged since 2014, with women being respectively 2.6 and 2 times more likely to work following such arrangement. Germany shows the largest disparity, with women working five times more often than men in these short-hour jobs. Türkiye overcame the Brisbane-related target with 8.2% of women and 3.5% of men working 20-29 hours per week.

Italy and Japan marginally narrowed the gender gap in 2021, with absolute differences of 15 and 15.7 percentage points between women and men, respectively. They are 2.7 and 2.8 percentage points away from meeting the target.

Figure 48: Gender gap in short hours of work (20-29 hours per week)



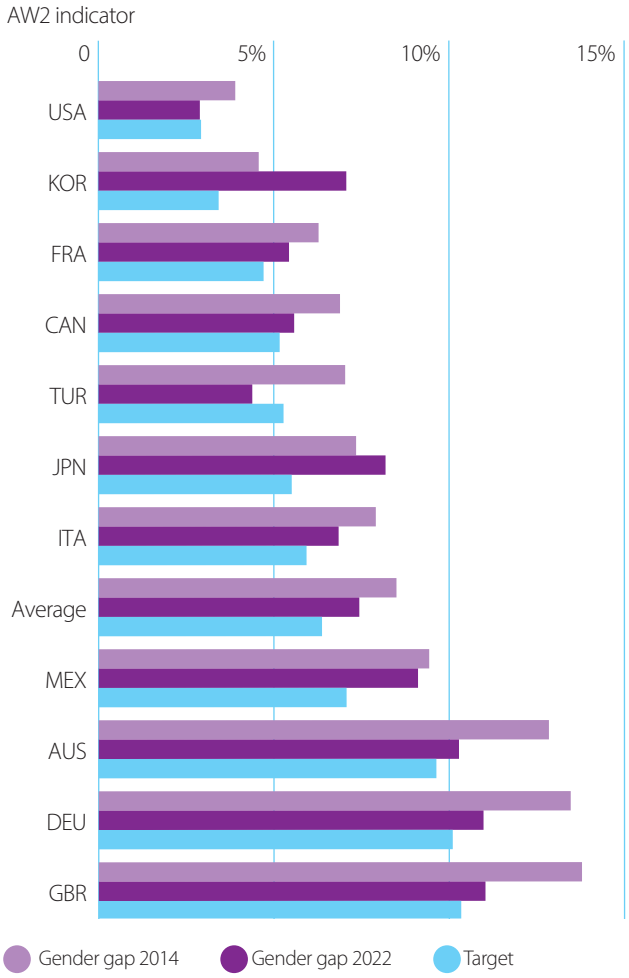
Gender difference in short hours of work is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD Family Database, 2022.

Notes: For Australia, Japan, Korea data refer to all jobs rather than the main job, for Japan and Korea data refer to actual weekly working hours rather than usual weekly working hours, and for the United States of America data refer to those in dependent employment only.

When looking at the gender gap in relation to 1-19 hour working arrangements, the data show that, on average, women are 2.4 times more likely than men to work 1 to 19 hours per week (Figure 49). This is still 1 percentage point from the Brisbane-related target. The Republic of Korea and Japan widened the gender gap in 2021 to respectively 7 and 8 percentage points absolute difference, distancing the country farthest from the target. In the remaining countries, all managed to reduce the gap and get closer to the target. In particular, the United States of America in 2021 with 6% of women and 3% of men in this working arrangement met the target already in 2021. Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland showed the largest reduction of the gap since 2014, getting on average to one percentage point difference from reaching the goal.

Figure 49: Gender gap in short hours of work (1-9 hours per week)



Gender difference in short hours of work is calculated as difference between women and men. The Target is calculated as 25% reduction of the gender gap in 2014.

Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD Family Database, 2022.

Notes: For Australia, Japan, Korea data refer to all jobs rather than the main job, for Japan and Korea data refer to actual weekly working hours rather than usual weekly working hours, and for the United States of America data refer to those in dependent employment only.

In summary, the results for the working conditions sub-domain reveal significant gender disparities. On average, women are 34.7% less likely than men to be engaged in working arrangements of 40 or more hours per week. Conversely, women are 2.4 times more likely than men to be involved in shorter working arrangements of 1-19 weekly hours, and are 10% less likely to be self-employed. In addition to this, women remain over-represented in unpaid work, spending 2.35 times more time on it than men. This unpaid labour affects their paid work opportunities, influencing the type, duration, and availability of paid employment, as well as their ability to develop needed skills and competencies. In the long term, this has consequences for social security benefits, savings, asset accumulation, and participation in decision-making processes, thus hindering women's empowerment and well-being.

The data also show that in households with children under six, mothers are 36.7% less likely to be employed than fathers. Additionally, women are 44% more likely than men to be underemployed, meaning they are often trapped in roles offering fewer hours than they desire. Overall, women face greater exclusion from the labour market, a trend that intensifies when caregiving responsibilities are involved. Work remains to be done to meet the Brisbane-related targets.

Chapter 4.

Women in innovation, the digital world and AI

Gender, technological change and innovation

Technological progress has consistently accompanied humanity, transforming all areas of science, shaping economies and societies, and ultimately impacting the lives of all individuals. Technology fields as diverse as biology, engineering, computer science, economics, journalism, politics, and social sciences have all shaped and have been deeply impacted by technological progress (Emmert-Streib, 2021), in turn contributing to craft the world as we know it.

Today, as societies become increasingly digital, technological development offers unprecedented opportunities but also poses important ethical challenges related to the development, deployment and use of transformational technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) (Chang et al., 2014).

As the UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (UNESCO, 2021) - the only global normative instrument that exists to date, applicable to the 194 Member States of UNESCO – underlines, while AI technologies can be of great service to humanity and all countries can benefit from them, they nevertheless raise fundamental ethical concerns. These regard the biases that AI can embed and exacerbate, potentially resulting in discrimination, inequality, digital divides, exclusion and a threat to cultural, social and biological diversity, as well as widening existing social or economic divides or creating new ones. AI technologies have the potential to impact human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, gender equality, democracy, social, economic, political and cultural processes, scientific and engineering practices, and the environment and ecosystems.

The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (henceforth the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI) devotes an entire policy area, namely policy area 6, to gender and to stressing the need for AI to be gender inclusive. It starts by encouraging Member States to ensure that the potential for digital technologies and artificial intelligence to contribute to achieving gender equality is fully maximized, alongside guaranteeing that the human rights and fundamental freedoms of girls and women, and their safety and integrity are not violated at any stage of the AI system life cycle.

It emphasizes the need to invest in targeted programmes and gender-specific language, to increase the opportunities of girls' and women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including information and communication technologies (ICT) disciplines, preparedness, employability, equal career development and professional growth of girls and women It further emphasizes the need for Member States to promote gender diversity in AI research, in both academia and industry, by giving incentives to girls and women to enter the field, putting in place mechanisms to fight gender stereotyping and harassment within the AI research community and encouraging academic and private entities to share best practices on how to enhance gender diversity.

UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI invites Member States to have dedicated funds from their public budgets linked to financing gender-responsive schemes, to ensure that national digital policies include a gender action plan, and to develop relevant policies, for example, on labour education, targeted at supporting girls and women, to make sure they are not left out of the digital economy powered by AI.

The Recommendation further asks Member States to ensure that the potential of AI systems to advance the achievement of gender equality is realized and that these technologies do not exacerbate the already wide gender gaps existing in several fields in the analogue world and instead eliminate those gaps. Among the gaps mentioned, some of which were already investigated in earlier parts of this report, there are: the gender wage gap; the unequal representation in certain professions and activities; the lack of representation at top management positions, boards of directors, or research teams in the AI field; the education gap; the digital and AI access, adoption, usage and affordability gap; and the unequal distribution of unpaid work and of the caring responsibilities in our societies.

Member States should ensure that gender stereotyping and discriminatory biases are not translated into AI systems and instead identify and proactively redress these. Efforts are necessary to avoid the compounding negative effect of technological divides in achieving gender equality and avoiding violence such as harassment, bullying or trafficking of girls and women and under-represented groups, including in the online domain.

In addition to the above, UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI further invites Member States to encourage female entrepreneurship, participation and engagement in all stages of an AI system life cycle. This could be achieved through offering and promoting economic, regulatory incentives, among other

incentives and support schemes, as well as policies that aim at a balanced gender participation in AI research in academia, gender representation on digital and AI companies' top management positions, boards of directors and research teams. Member States, it argues, should ensure that public funds (for innovation, research and technologies) are channelled to inclusive programmes and companies, with clear gender representation, and that private funds are similarly encouraged through affirmative action principles.

As AI can also help fuel online violence, and enable or amplify misinformation, disinformation and deepfakes, the Recommendation advocates for policies on harassment-free environments to be developed and enforced, and encourages the sharing of best practices on how to promote diversity in AI systems.

Being involved in, and contributing to, what some call the AI revolution[17] (e.g. Harari, 2017, G20 Brazil, 2024) is key to ensure that these transformative technologies account for the need, desiderata and perspectives of women and girls, and cater for humanity as a whole, including under-represented groups. Evidence shows that AI systems and applications leveraging AI are already widespread in both the public and the private sectors, spanning domains as different as healthcare, finance or agriculture (G7 2024; G20 Brazilian Presidency 2024). For instance, in healthcare, AI aids the advancement of patient-tailored medicine (Ying Liu et al., 2019), in economics AI models have been helping optimize production processes, improve robotics, and facilitate automation in manufacturing and service industries (Mnih et al., 2015).

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, it is important to also highlight that the widespread use of AI can trigger a number of other challenges, some of which are briefly mentioned in what follows. These include sustainability challenges: training large AI models demands substantial computational power, leading to high energy consumption. This raises environmental concerns, particularly regarding carbon emissions, as computational centres often rely on non-renewable energy sources (Nzubechukwu Chukwudum Ohalete et al., 2023).

Moreover, the widespread use of AI in customer service and caregiving, particularly in contexts involving direct interaction between humans and machines, risks dehumanizing these relationships and diminishing the value of human connections (Oldfield, 2023). AI can also enable automated targeting and influencing of individuals, particularly through highly personalized search algorithms and micro-targeted advertising. This raises concerns about the potential for manipulation and exploitation of personal data (Ienca, 2023). Additionally, AI can be weaponized in cybersecurity, enhancing the effectiveness of cyberattacks, phishing schemes, and malware campaigns. In military contexts, the deployment of autonomous weapons poses serious threats to global security and defence (Burton and Soare, 2019; Guembe et al., 2022).

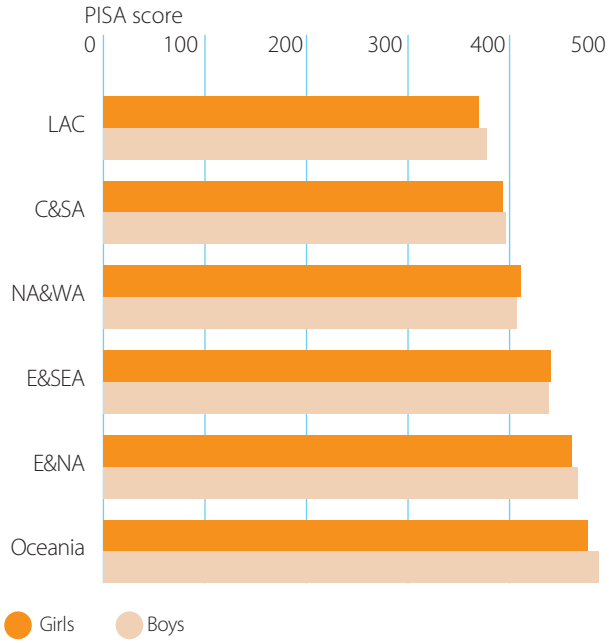
At a macro level, AI may widen economic inequalities within and between countries, and at the n a micro level, it can exacerbate divides within societies, whereby those with the relevant skills (also digital skills) gain opportunities, while those without face a higher risk of unemployment or displacement if they fail to reskill. This highlights the importance of prioritizing education, digital literacy, and infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and protect vulnerable populations in an AI-driven economy (Bongs, 2023; Dr. A.Shaji George, 2024).

AI systems can perpetuate and even amplify societal biases when trained on non-diverse datasets. These biases, rooted in existing social inequalities, can lead to unfair and opaque decision-making in AI applications, such as hiring, law enforcement, and lending, where individuals may be disadvantaged based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status (Nadeem et al., 2020). As an example, in hiring, law enforcement, or lending money, AI may unfairly disadvantage individuals based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status.

To this end, it is paramount to ensure the widest participation of diverse people in designing and training AI algorithms. Yet, AI is a discipline highly connected with computer science, a subject mainly studied in bachelor's degrees in informatics or mathematics and statistics. The majority of students in these branches are male, fact that raises concerns about the low influence that women may have in shaping AI and, consequently, the design and applications of AI powered tools (Gibert and Valls, 2022). This often is the result of stereotypes holding that women are not very gifted when it comes to mathematics of other natural sciences subjects, and of the family pressure and professional orientation that girls receive (OECD, 2018; OECD 2020).

17 https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/paving-way-responsible-ai-unesco-and-g7-toolkit-initiative

Figure 50: Girls and Boys achievement in mathematics programme (PISA - 2022)



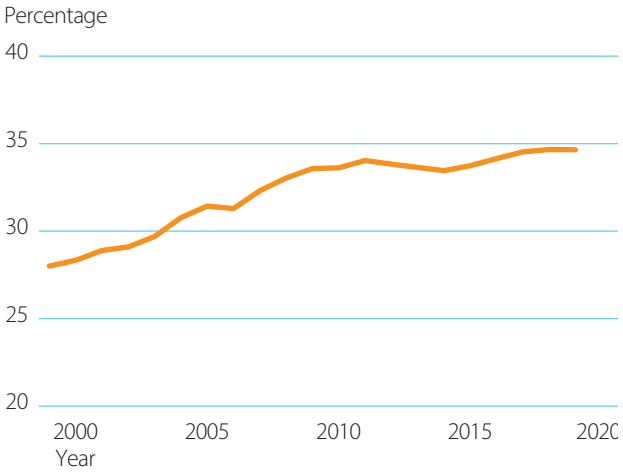
Source: Authors' own compilation based on OECD PISA data, 2022.

Figure 50 nevertheless suggests this to be a false myth. Evidence gathered in the context of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), shows that 15-year-old girls and boys achieve very similar scores when it comes to mathematics, thus pointing to the fact that both girls and boys are equally likely to succeed in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, if performance in maths can be considered as a predictor.

Figure 51 shows that the share of female graduates from STEM in all UNESCO countries for which data are available for the last twenty-four years does not exceed 35%. In 2000, female graduated in STEM subjects were 28%. Although their percentage has been constantly growing over the years, STEMs are far from being a popular choice among young women, as it is for young men.

Female graduates in STEM

Figure 51: Female share of graduates from Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on World Bank data, 2022.

Career aspirations are often shaped by societal gender stereotypes and not by talent (Gibert and Valls, 2022; UNESCO, 2023a). The stereotype that men are inherently better at mathematics than women hinders women's performance in this subject and diminishes their interest in math-intensive fields (Abbate, 2012; Charles and Bradley, 2009). Family and cultural influences also play a significant role, often associating technology-related roles with boys, while girls are steered towards care and humanistic activities (Bian et al., 2017). This gendered division of roles is further reinforced by mainstream media, where women are underrepresented and frequently portrayed in traditional caregiving roles, with characters often limited to stereotypes about beauty and sex appeal (Ward and Grower, 2020). The general lack of female role models in STEM, whether in media or in real life, impacts the aspirations of girls and perpetuates gendered career interests. This vicious cycle contributes to the gradual exclusion of women from fields like machine learning and data science, at a time when their contributions are crucial for reducing the bias in designing and training AI algorithms and ensuring the full potential of global talent in the AI era.

Furthermore, evidence shows that women working in male-dominated STEM fields, being both outnumbered and negatively stereotyped, experience high levels of what can be called "gender identity threats" in psychology, which further fuels the 'leaky pipeline' and prevents their retention in STEM fields (Van Veelen et al., 2019).

Women in the digital world and AI

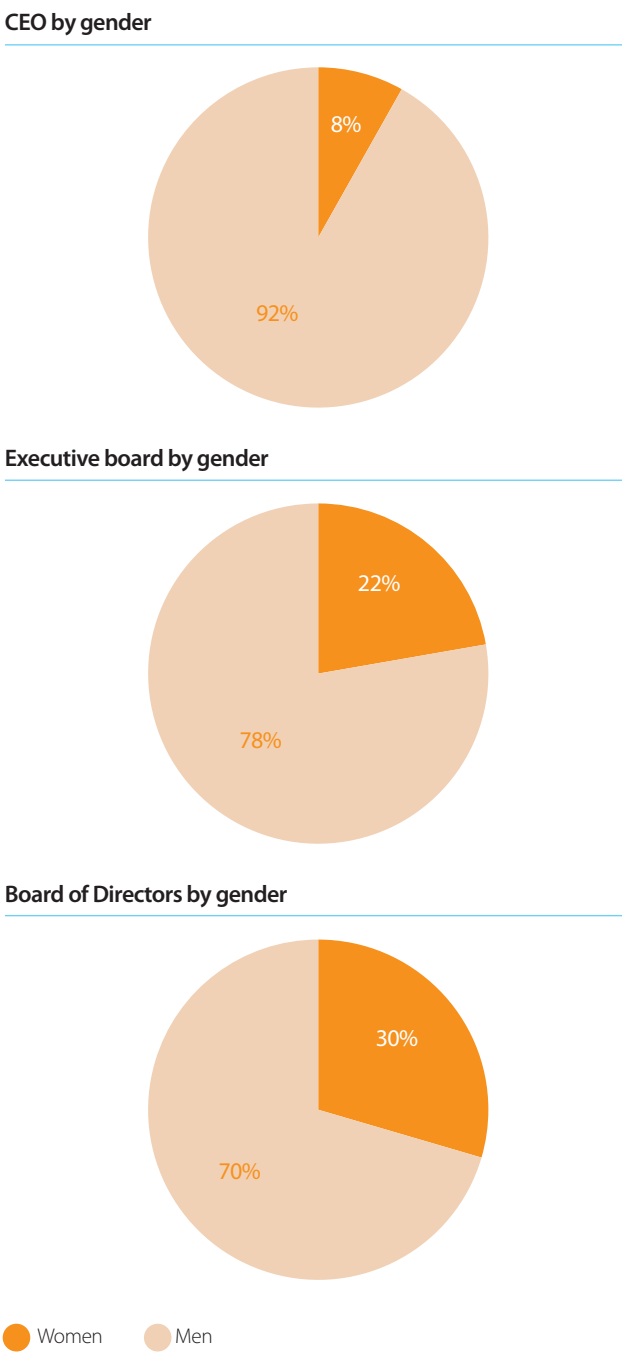
AI is growing rapidly, with estimates suggesting that global GDP could increase by up to 14%, or approximately 15.7 trillion USD, by 2030 due to the accelerating development and adoption of AI technologies (PwC, 2018). By that time, around 70% of companies worldwide are expected to have adopted at least one type of AI technology, although less than half of large companies are likely to fully harness the potential of AI across its various applications (Chui et al., 2023).

AI is transforming nearly every sector, making life easier, safer, healthier, and more efficient, it also exposes society to significant ethical, technical, and legal challenges that call for suitable governance ensuring that AI is built, used and leveraged in an ethical fashion and that it abides by human rights, human dignity and fundamental freedoms .

Despite the rapid expansion of AI, or also because of it, the field faces a critical diversity crisis, marked by the underrepresentation of women and of other demographic groups. This lack of diversity poses a serious challenge, as it biases AI outcomes (Roopaei et al., 2021). Diversity is essential for AI, reflecting the statistical foundation of the technology, where the composition of the data and the representation of individuals directly shape the algorithm's learning process. When AI systems are trained without equitable consideration of all demographic groups, this can result in biases, leading to significant performance disparities and potential harm to underrepresented populations (Leavy, 2018).

To try and measure several of the facets that the gender bias in AI may take, including lack of diversity in leadership, we collected available gender-disaggregated data related to the decision-making bodies of the 100 top high-tech companies ranked in the MarketCap index[18].

Figure 52: Decision-making bodies in top 100 high-tech companies



Source: : UNESCO's own data collection and analysis based on companies' annual report, 2023.

As can be seen from Figure 52, the 100 companies at the edge of technology and innovation exhibit a heavy underrepresentation of women in their decision-making bodies. Women represent only 8% of CEO roles, 22% of Executive boards members and 30% in the Boards of Directors. This not only provides evidence in relation to the lack of gender diversity in such companies, with the consequent decrease in the wealth of ideas and creativity that lack of diversity implies. It further points to the the possible limited

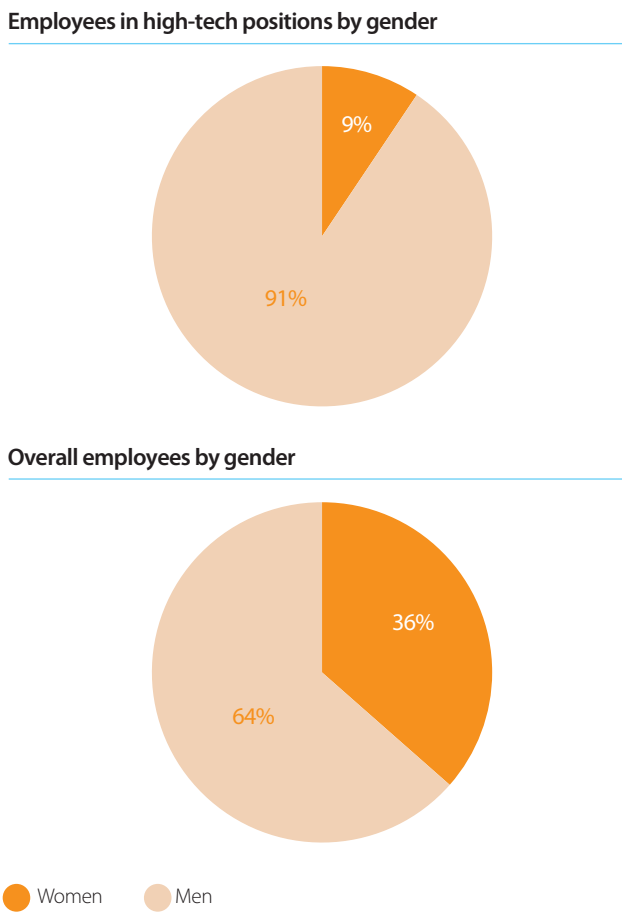
18 https://companiesmarketcap.com/tech/most-profitable-tech-companies/#google_vignette

capacity or engagement of such companies to promote role models and a culture where women feel welcomed, safe and heard, and that allows them to perform at their best. Evidence shows that prioritizing diversity in leadership are more likely to outperform their peers: in the AI context, diversity in development and implementation becomes imperative to avoid perpetuating biases and promoting fairness (Ferrara, 2023).

When analysing the distribution of employees by gender, the gender gap appears slightly less pronounced. According to the annual report of the top 100 high-tech companies, women are 37% of the overall labour force, which includes employees in retail, administrative, leadership as well as technical roles. When focusing on positions that require high-tech competencies, women represent only 9% of overall employees. This may partially reflect the relatively lower share of women who graduated in STEM subjects as shown in Figure 51, but can also be the result of conscious or unconscious biases characterizing hiring and promotion dynamics, whereby women are considered less able and competent for tech roles as compared to men. This may translate into men's applications being preferred to equally or even more qualified female applicants, thus contributing to tangible discriminations in employment and the career opportunities of women (Zhang, 2024).

Embracing gender diversity in tech is not just an ethical imperative but also a strategic move for sustained and inclusive economic growth. Gender diversity in technology enhances team dynamics, and stimulates out-of-the-box and creative thinking (Wynn, 2020). In inclusive work environments, women often bring unique viewpoints and approaches, fostering a richer pool of ideas within tech teams. This diversity in thoughts and approaches becomes a catalyst for creativity and innovation, enabling companies to develop solutions that are more comprehensive and adaptable to a variety of scenarios (Ezeugwa et al., 2024).

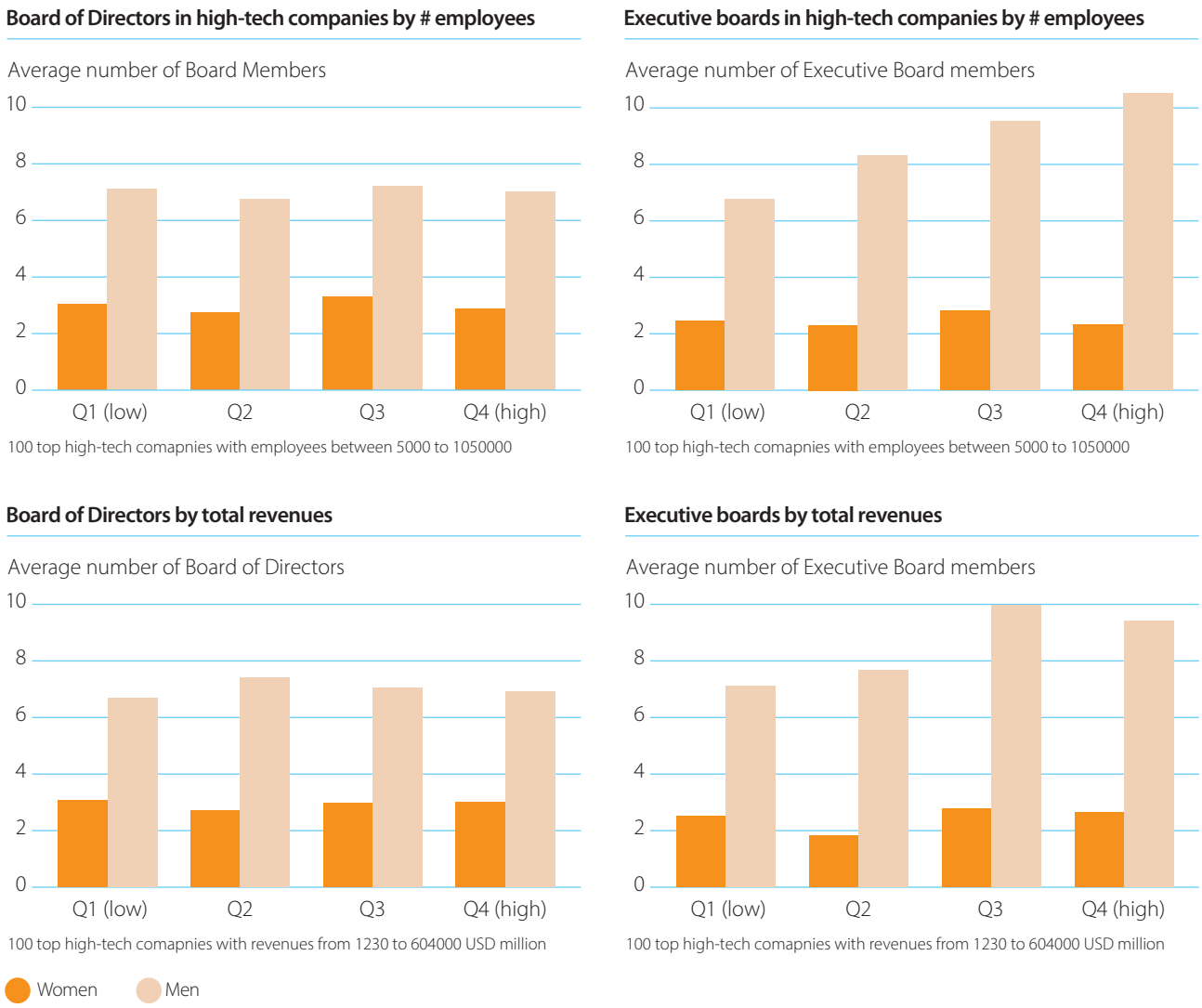
Figure 53: Gender distribution of employees in the top 100 high-tech companies



Source: : UNESCO's own data collection and analysis based on companies' annual report, 2023.

The underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies appears to be uncorrelated with the size of the company, as proxied by the number of employees and the total revenues, as results show in Figure 53. This points to the existence of a structural problem, rather than on constraints based on e.g. overall number of employees or paucity of opportunities.

Figure 54: Decision making bodies by numeber of employees and total revenues



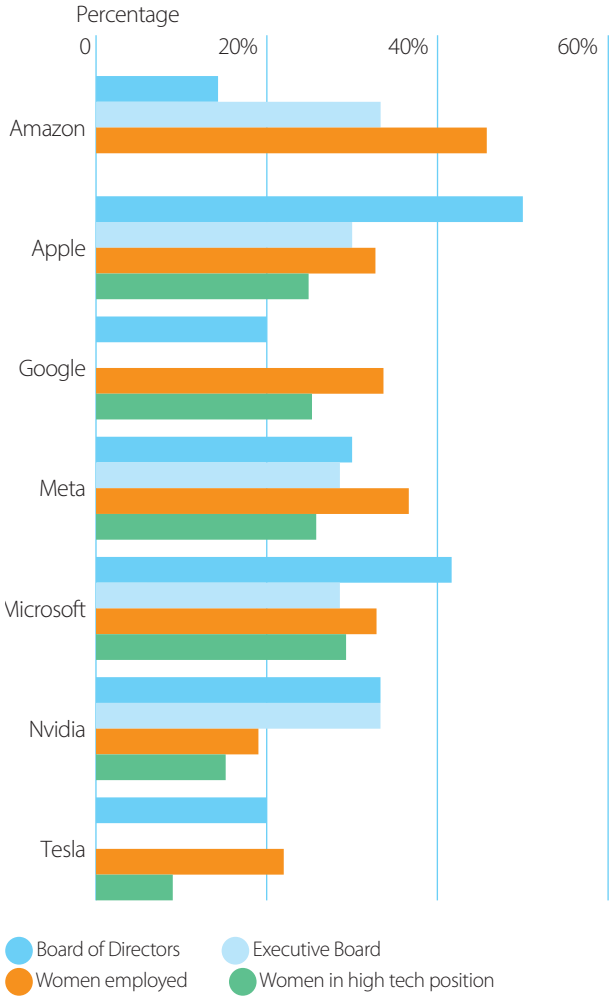
Source: UNESCO's own data collection and analysis based on companies' annual report, 2023.

Traditional hiring practices may further contribute to limiting women's career advancements in companies positioned at the edge of innovation. The complexity of the organizational structure of these companies, their being structured along multiple layers of management, where the promotion of qualified women may challenge entrenched hierarchies, established cultures and long-lasting patriarchal practices, may further contribute to explain the deceiving statistics observed. Furthermore, the under- representation of women in technical roles as shown as in Figure 54, may contribute to explain or is itself explained by the leaky pipeline effect, whereby a fewer women progress in the career ladder within these high-tech companies (Parsheera, 2018). Finally, although large high-tech companies may have the resources, they need to foster inclusion and diversity, such initiatives might take time to be fully effective and enable women to progress towards a leadership career, especially if starting from an entry level position.

When zooming on the top seven big tech companies, namely Amazon, Apple, Google (Alphabet), Meta (Facebook), Microsoft, Nvidia and Tesla, as shown in Figure 55, a clear picture emerges, whereby gender inclusion remains low, both within decision-making bodies and among employees. The top seven dominate the high-tech industry worldwide and exercise their influence not only thanks to their market power and size - Amazon alone counts more than one million employees worldwide -, but mainly because they set the pace of in relation to industry standards, innovation and corporate culture. While the topic of diversity and gender inclusion became increasingly important within this core group of companies, concrete progress remains uneven.

Among the seven, Apple is the only company exhibiting gender parity in the Board of Directors, while nevertheless counting only 30% of women in the Executive Board.

Figure 55: Women's representation in the top 7 high-tech companies



Source: UNESCO's own data collection and analysis based on companies' annual report, 2023.

Note: Google has no women on the Executive Board, while Testa has no Executive Board. Amazon has no high-tech positions.

Based on the information gathered from the before cited report and from their websites and annual reports, the top seven high-tech companies did work towards more gender and racial diversity and inclusion. Yet, according to their 2023 annual report, women only make up 33% of their workforce, with 25% employed in technical roles. Among the top 7, Amazon, which has made of inclusion one of its top corporate priorities, reports 46% of women employed. This is described by the company as a result of the inclusion and diversity initiatives they put in place to attract, retain and advance women. While this company is on a good path in terms of overall women's representation, they would still need to improve the gender balance of their decision-making bodies, as they currently have 29% of women in the Executive Board and 42% in the Board of Directors.

Microsoft is among the most vocal about its commitment to diversity and inclusion, and counts 42% of women in the Board of Directors and 28.5% in the Executive Board. Overall, women represent 33% of the workforce, with 29% in technical roles, where women's representation remains a challenge.

In the case of NVIDIA, there are 33% of women in decision-making bodies. Women represent only one-fifth of the total workforce, and just 15% of women appear in technical roles.

Women make up one third of Google's total workforce and 25% Google's technical roles. Leadership positions are predominantly dominated by men: only one in five members of the Board of Directors is a woman, and there are no women in the Executive Board. This has attracted many criticisms, also in relation to the slow pace of improvement.

Regarding Meta, although it claims to have made heavy investment to foster inclusion and diversity, results show that women make 37% of the total workforce, and around 30% of decision-making bodies. Also, the company seemingly struggles to increase women's employment rate in technical roles, currently set at 26%.

Last, Tesla lags behind other tech giants with regards to diversity and inclusion. They do not publish detailed diversity reports like their peers, but results show that women make 22% of the overall workforce, with only 9% of women in technical roles. The representation of women in leadership likely remains at about 20%.

The role of women in AI-related innovations: Evidence from patents

The literature has long established that patents can represent a good proxy for innovative output (see, e.g. Griliches, 1984; Nagaoka, Motohashi and Goto, 2010) and they have been used, together with other research and innovation indicators such as publications and software packages, to identify and measure innovative output related to AI (Baruffaldi et al., 2020). In what follows, we leverage data about patent documents published worldwide in 2022 and 2023 to assess the extent to which women participate in inventive and innovative activities in relation to transformational technologies such as AI.

Being part of inventive activities is a must if we want future technologies to be inclusive in approach and scope, and for them to mirror women's beliefs, approaches, desiderata and needs. This is not only good for women inventors, but for all women and, more broadly, for society as a whole, as existing evidence shows. For instance, Koning, Samila and Ferguson (2021) find that, across biomedical research areas, patents featuring all-female inventor teams are 35% more likely than all-male teams to focus on women's health, and that female researchers are more likely to discover female-focused ideas. They conclude wondering how much societies may have lost due to the inventors' gender gap. Agrawal et al. (2024), investigate and find evidence about the fact that stronger intellectual property rights can help increase the participation of women in innovative activities related to AI and, in turn, the quality of the innovative output produced, thus benefitting society and innovation.

Brouillette (2024) further argues that, as women and men inventors are similarly educated and productive, the underrepresentation of women in innovation is likely to be blamed to lack of exposure to innovation, which may partially operate through (distorted) selection of human capital. The author finds that lifting barriers to female innovation may increase long run U.S. income per person by 8.6% or, equivalently, permanently raising everyone's consumption by 2.7%. In addition, findings like those of Wu et al. (2021), who show that firms having female chief technology officers (CTOs) are more innovative than firms with male CTOs, and that corporate innovation is more pronounced for firms featuring stronger innovation-supportive culture, female CEOs, or more empowered female CTOs, point to sever societal losses driven by the insufficient empowerment of women in tech and innovation. Fuentes-Fuentes et al. (2023), provide additional evidence about the positive effect that gender diversity in management, as proxied by the presence of at least one woman on the board of directors, has on inclusive innovation, also showing that inclusive innovation positively influences performance.

We leverage an approach similar to the one of Baruffaldi et al.' (2020), improved applying Large Language Models (LLMs) to check on patent content, on data from the ORBIS Intellectual Property Database related to patents published in 2022 and 2023. This allows identifying 59132 patents as being AI-related. Looking at the gender of the inventors of such AI patents we see that, overall, women account for 46,1% of total number of inventors. Patents featuring women inventors only account for 10,14% of the sample, while men-only teams of inventors account for 31,32% of all patents identified as being AI-related. This entails that, while almost 60% of AI patents see the presence of at least one woman in the teams of inventors, almost one third of all AI-related patents mirror men and men-only criteria and approaches.

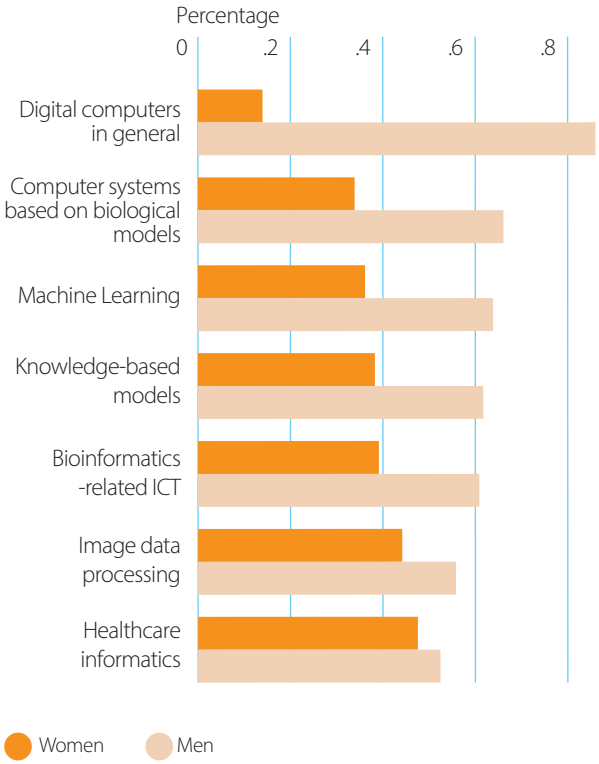
Figure 56 and Table 5 show, in fractional counts, how women and men inventors contribute to different types of innovations in AI, identified leveraging the Internatioanl Patent Classification (IPC) categories. IPC are used to classify patents according to the different areas of technology to which they belong.

Table 5: Number of AI-related patents by IPC class, women and men's contribution, 2022-2023

IPC category	Women	Men	Number of Patent
Bioinformatics-related ICT	39,13	60,87	733
Computer systems based on biological model	38,28	61,72	36091
Digital computers in general	13,99	86,01	28
Healthcare informatics	47,56	52,44	663
Image data processing	44,19	55,81	341
Knowledge-based models	36,16	63,84	5944
Machine Learning	33,90	66,10	15332

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ORBIS Intellectual Property database, 2024.

Figure 56: Inventors in AI patents, by gender and technology class, fractional counts (2022-2023)



Source: Authors' own analysis based on ORBIS Intellectual Property database, 2024.

As can be seen, the highest number of AI patents relate to computer systems based on biological models (more than 36,000), to machine learning (more than 15,000) and to knowledge-based models (about 6,000). All together these three subfields account for about 97% of all AI-related patents identified in the period considered. The presence of women inventors in these areas ranges between about 34% and 38%. in line with what found by existing literature, the presence of women inventors is highest in relation to AI-related healthcare informatics, at about 48%, although in this case we are talking about 700 innovations overall.

Table 6 sheds further light in relation to the type of innovations that men inventor and women inventor-only teams focus on, in terms of technology areas in AI innovations.

Table 6: Patents in AI by teams of only men or only women inventors, by technology class, fractional counts (2022-2023)

IPC categories	Only men	Only women
Bioinformatics-related ICT	180	62
Computer systems based on biological model	10809	3835
Digital computers in general	18	
Healthcare informatics	125	73
Image data processing	80	61
Knowledge-based models	1924	572
Machine Learning	5481	1425

Source: Authors' own compilation based on ORBIS Intellectual Property database, 2024.

As Table 6 shows, about one third or more of all AI patents related to computer systems based on biological models, to machine learning and to knowledge-based models is the result of men-only teams of inventors. As patents represent innovations that are very likely to reach the market in the near future, the patterns observed basically entail that at least one third of all the machines and algorithms that we will be using or rely upon will follow a men-like logic only, and likely overlook any women related perspective, constraint or need. If we want the future to be inclusive and reflect, account and cater for the needs of all, this needs to change. Existing evidence in addition shows that making AI-related technologies more inclusive by design will benefit all, and not only those that will be more included (see e.g. Griffin, Li and Xu, 2020).

Prioritizing gender equality in AI policy frameworks

Improving gender equality in and through AI requires more than technical solutions. It demands political commitment at the highest level and concerted efforts, actions, and budgets to make the structural changes needed to increase gender equality in AI, its lifecycle, and related governance mechanisms.

While the governance of AI and AI governance framework models have been developed and discussed globally in recent years, efforts to analyse the AI policy landscape and assess countries readiness to develop, deploy and use AI, and do so ethically – i.e. in a way that upholds human rights, human dignity and fundamental freedoms - only seldom take gender into account.

For example, the Oxford Insights' AI Readiness Index uses only two gender-related indicators — equality of Internet usage and the percentage of women and girls in STEM (Oxford Insights, 2023). Similarly, the AI and Democratic Values Index (CAIDP, 2024) only includes an indirect examination of gender, with no explicit mention of gender equality in the methodology used. The OECD AI Observatory Database of AI Policies, which contains information about over 1000 policy initiatives from 69 countries, highlights «women» in only 47 of the initiatives considered (OECD.AI, 2021).

This represents a mere 4.7% of all observations, thus underscoring the lack of focus on gender equality in the AI policy debate. Additionally, it is unclear how and when women are included in AI policy agendas.

The recently launched UNESCO Gender and AI Outlook shows that only 24 out of 138 countries assessed had government frameworks in place, with 37 governments demonstrating evidence of initiatives promoting gender equality in the context of AI, while 67 had non-state actors in place working on the topic. To understand how women are represented in the AI governance discourse and throughout the design, practice and evaluation of AI governance mechanisms, the Outlook analysed the 20 available government frameworks that the Global Index on Responsible AI (GIRAI) identified as including gender equity (Adams et al. 2024).

The analysis revealed that many policy documents did not mention women or relegated them to appendices. Even when gender was acknowledged, there was often no commitment to address gender-related issues.

These findings point to the need for real efforts integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue in AI governance. UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) provides an opportunity for Member States to identify potential gaps and (better) incorporate gender considerations and gender equality into their AI strategies (UNESCO, 2023b). Without understanding and addressing these gaps, minimal progress can be made in achieving gender equality both in and through AI.

Towards the gender-based resilient future we want: some conclusions and policy implications

Making women able to actively and relevantly participate in decision-making, in both policy and the economy, in the workforce, or technology and innovation hinges on tackling persistent gender disparities across all sectors. As we look to shape the future for good and for all, embracing a gender-transformative resilience approach becomes essential to navigating the profound transitions that the twin green and tech transitions entail, and to address social challenges. For this, creating the conditions for women to not only be included but also lead cannot be further delayed.

The ongoing technological and AI transformation is reshaping how people work, learn, and interact. This coupled with climate change, demographic pressures, and ongoing conflicts, further stress-test societal resilience, heightening vulnerabilities. Creating a resilient and inclusive future requires a shift in established paradigms and the empowerment of women in the political, economic, and technological spheres, ensuring their voices can shape the systems, policies, and technologies of tomorrow.

Central to this is the adoption of the gender-based resilience approach which highlights how new crises, entrenched structural changes and systemic inequalities stem from and perpetuate gender disparity. To this end, it is paramount to stop gender-based violence, which severely curbs women's full participation in society. Whatever the form it takes, violence not only constitutes a violation of human rights, but also an affront to women's dignity and integrity, impacting every aspect of their lives — from economic opportunities to political empowerment. Only a comprehensive approach that prioritises the eradication of violence against women can effectively

advance gender equality, against data that continue to show alarming paths. While fewer and fewer women find domestic violence acceptable, progress remains too slow. This calls for comprehensive legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms, complemented by targeted education programmes aimed at transforming MEN'talities and changing societal attitudes.

We must further address the underlying causes of inequalities, to ensure that systems are more inclusive and resilient in the future. This calls for greater women's representation in leadership and policy-making, which is a condition needed to design and implement policies that are inclusive and attuned to the needs of all citizens. Evidence from this report indicates that countries with a greater presence of women in leadership positions tend to achieve stronger governance outcomes, including reduced corruption, enhanced democratic practices, and greater investment in social welfare.

Achieving gender parity in democratic representation stands out as one of the most urgent goals for the future. Despite some progress, women remain significantly underrepresented in the policy environment. In 2024, many and many large countries held elections, bringing thousands of women into political decision-making roles. However, as we saw, women still represent a minority: during the 2024 presidential elections, 4 women out of 27 candidates have been elected, and in 14 countries, no woman featured among the candidates. While recent developments point to an ongoing transformation, the road ahead is long and steep, if we want to move beyond «business as usual» and have more inclusive policy-making systems.

Women's economic empowerment is another cornerstone of achieving gender equality. The Brisbane target set by the G20 in 2014, aiming to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25% by 2025, is an essential benchmark. Assessing the extent to which countries have been able to meet the Brisbane Target and the additional targets set later under the G20 Italian Presidency, shows that when there is a will there is a way, and that agreeing on targets does help moving the gender agenda forward. However, while most G20 countries showed notable advances in relation to several indicators, disparities persist, and the analysis shows that women's participation in the labour market continues to be hindered by persistent structural barriers that confine relatively more women in vulnerable jobs and fuel the gender pay gaps.

Moving forward, it will be critical to not only have more women participate in the labour market, but also ensure that they can lead. Women's inclusion in high-tech industries such as AI, but also the clean energy sector, will be pivotal to achieving broader economic inclusiveness and sustainability, and better economic performance. The analysis we perform on first-hand data finds that women hold only 8% of CEO positions, 22% of the Executive Boards' members and 30% of the Boards of Directors in the top 100 high-tech companies.

As we navigate the AI era, new opportunities as well as challenges arise, and women remain significantly underrepresented in STEM fields, with only 28% of STEM workers globally being women (UNESCO, 2022c). This disparity is exacerbated in AI, where women represent only 22% of professionals[19]. and account for about 37% of innovation related to AI. To shape a more equitable and fair future, it is imperative to increase women's representation in innovative sectors. Gender-diverse teams are more creative and productive, and the absence of women in these fields is likely to result in technologies that perpetuate biases and overlook needs and desiderata. This is especially true in AI systems, which tend to replicate the patterns contained in the data on which they are trained: if the data are biased or non-representative (as it is the case when women are not or only partially accounted for), the resulting algorithms and predictions will be biased too.

Concluding, the evidence proposed here is clear: No (leadership) share no gain (for societies and economies), and policy has an important role to play and to make this possible.

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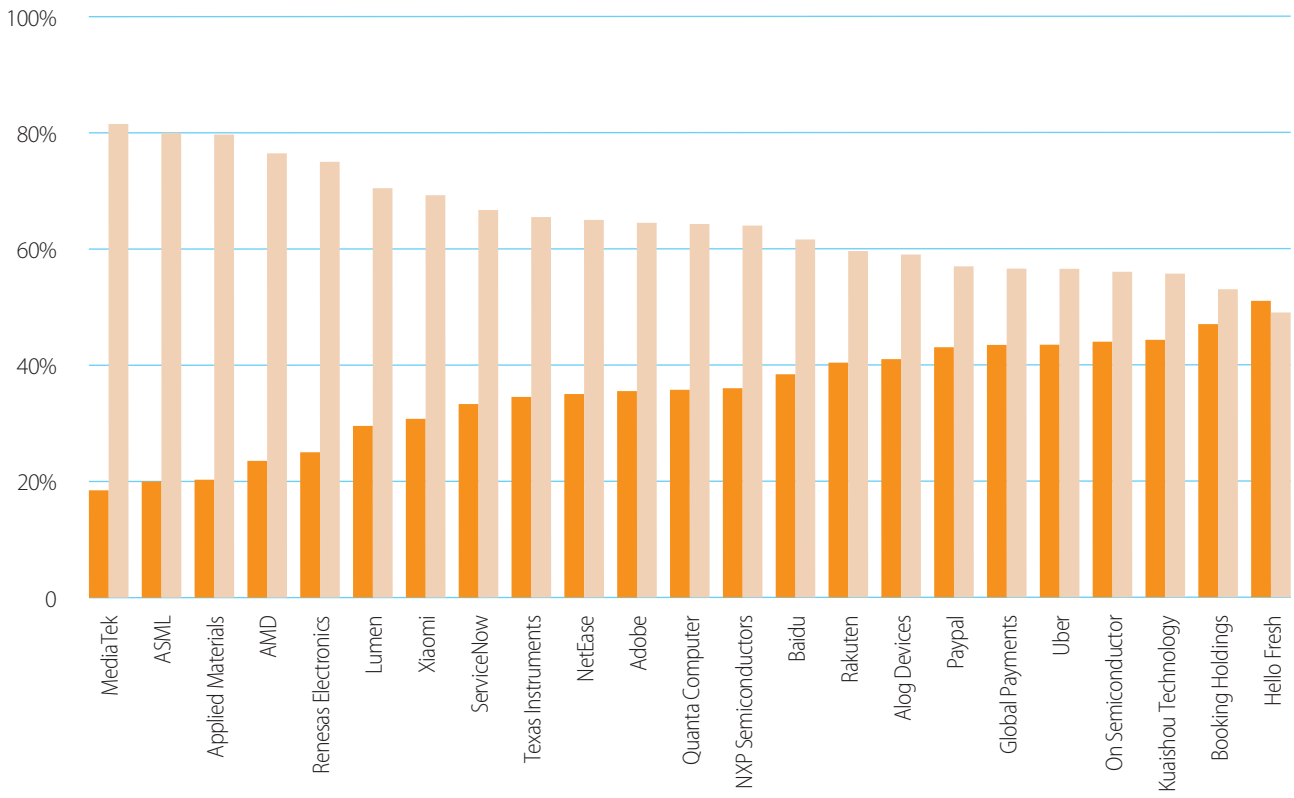
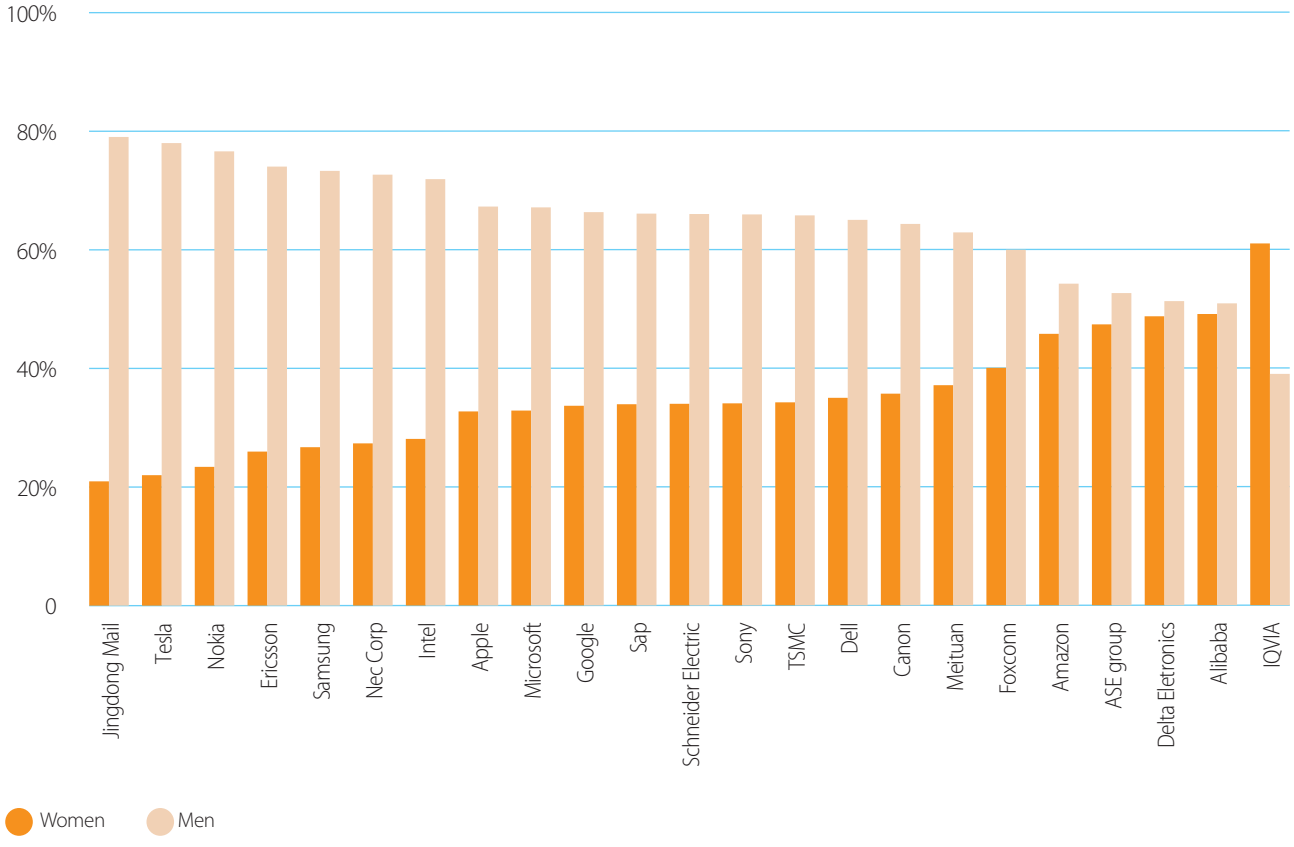
Annex I.
Details of the gender distribution of employees by company

Women and men employed in hight tech companies by # employees

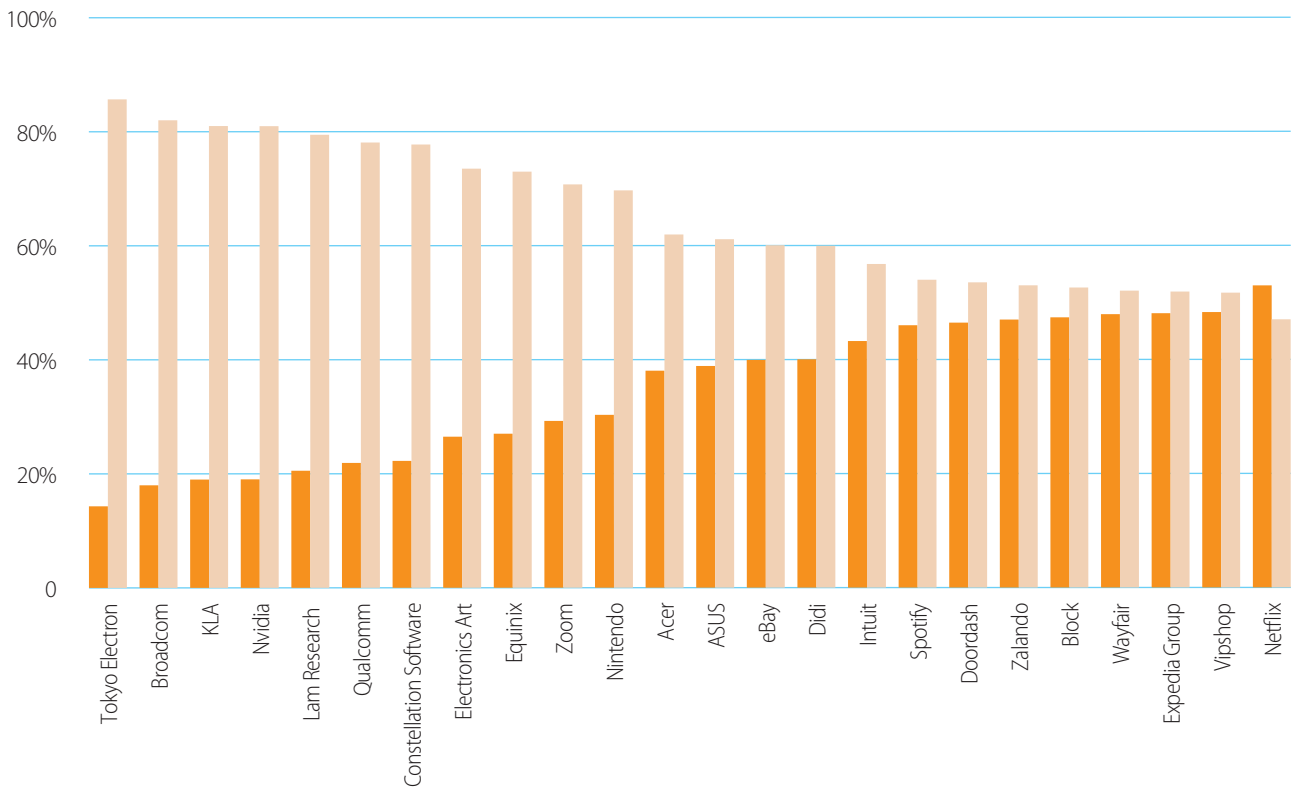
100 top high-tech comapnies with employees between 5000 to 18000



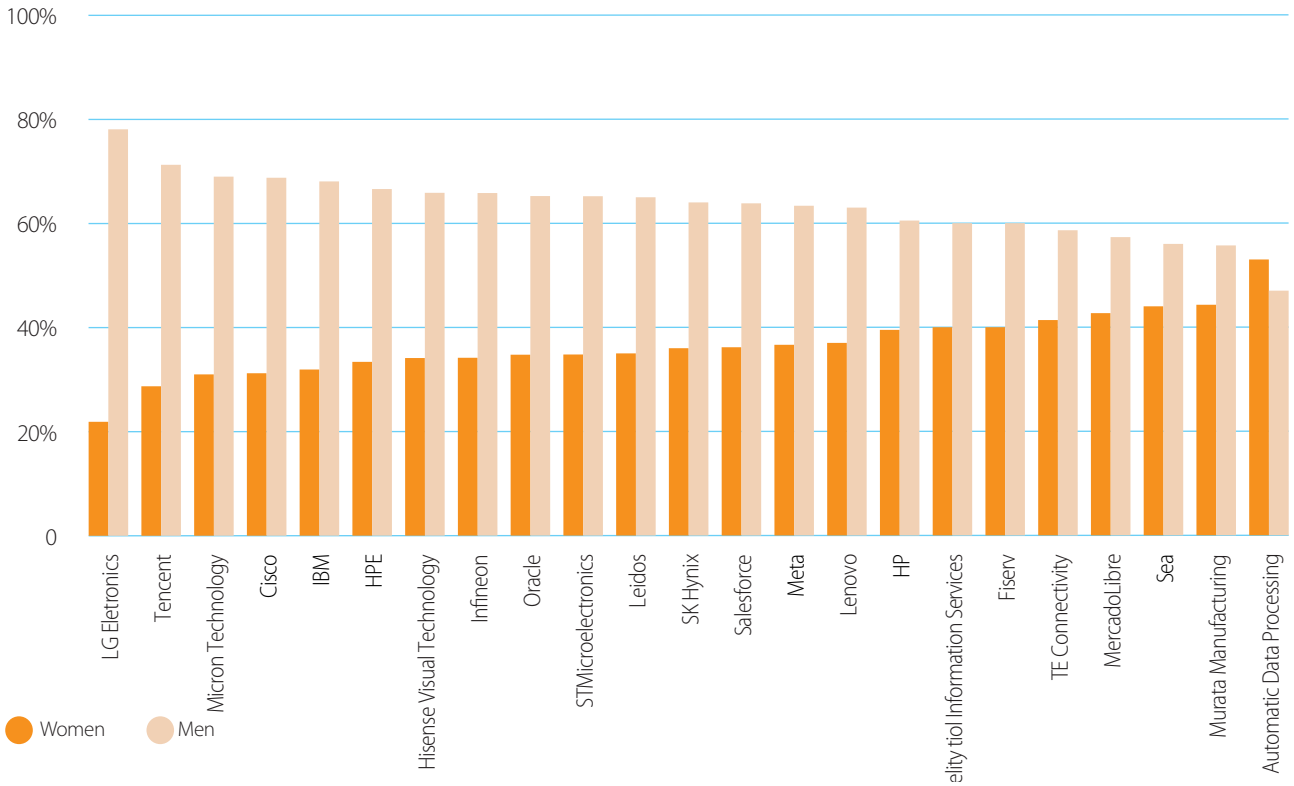
100 top high-tech comapnies with employees between 19000 to 38600



100 top high-tech comapnies with employees between 39800 to 73400



100 top high-tech comapnies with employees between 76700 to 1050000



Glossary

Brisbane target	A commitment made in 2014 by G20 leaders to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation rates by 25% by 2025, with the aim of bringing 100 million women into the labour market, increasing global and inclusive growth, and reducing poverty and inequality. This pledge was part of the Brisbane Action Plan, outlining a comprehensive strategy for achieving sustainable and balanced growth.	Source
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, People of Color. This term is being used to acknowledge that not all people of color face equal levels of injustice.	Source
Capacity	Refers to the combination of all the strengths, attributes, resources, mechanisms or strategies available to a community, society or organization that can be used to achieve agreed goals, cope with hazards and conflict, and prepare for, mitigate and respond to risks and disasters.	Source
Decent work	Refers to the productive work in which rights are protected, which generates an adequate income, with adequate social protection. Also means sufficient work, in the sense that all should have full access to income-earning opportunities.	Source
Discrimination	Refers to any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status.	Source
Diversity	Refers to peoples' differences, which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status. The term recognizes that individuals' preferences and self-expression fall outside commonly understood norms or standards.	Source
Employment rate	A measure of the extent to which available labour resources (people available to work) are being used. They are calculated as the ratio of the employed to the working age population.	Source
Gender	Refers to the socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men, or girls and boys, but to the relationship between them -The formulation 'women and men' or 'girls and boys' is used throughout the document for ease of reading. It is not meant to exclude people who identify as non-binary. - UNESCO recognizes that gender interacts with other characteristics such as age, ethnicity, wealth, status, ability, geographical location, and sexual orientation, and that there is diversity in gender identity and expression.	Source Source

Gender analysis	An assessment exercise to understand the differences and similarities between women and men with regards to their experiences, knowledge, conditions, needs, access to and control over resources, and access to development benefits and decision-making powers. It is critical step towards gender-responsive and gender-transformative planning and programming.	Source
Gender aware	Means knowing that there are concerns, differences and inequalities between women and men. Gender and development (GAD) The GAD approach focuses on seeking to address unequal gender relations which prevent inequitable	Source
Gender bias	Is the tendency to prefer or favour one gender over another. It is a form of unconscious or implicit bias, which occurs when we attribute certain attitudes and stereotypes to another person or group of people.	Source
Gender disparities	Refers to the differences in women's and men's access to resources, status and well-being, which usually favour men and are often institutionalised through law, justice and social norms.	Source
Gender equality	Equality between women and men – "Gender equality" refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities do not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but concerns all men, women, girls and boys. Equality between women and men is both a human right and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development. Under the conditions of gender equality, women and men enjoy the same status and have equal opportunity to realize their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. It is the equal valuing by society of both the similarities and the differences between women and men and the different roles they play.	Source
Gender equality in education	Means that the right to education of all learners – girls and boys, women and men – is respected equally. Learners of all genders are given equal access to learning opportunities, resources and protections, and learners of all genders benefit from and are treated in education equally	Source
Gender equality through education	Refers to the fact that education has a key role to play in addressing the wider issue of gender equality. Educational institutions can promote new attitudes and patterns of belief, transforming the way people think about traditional gender roles and helping to build long-term sustainable change. Achieving equal outcomes for both female and male learners can help to empower people of all genders to create better lives.	Source
Gender equity	refers to the process of being fair to girls and boys, women and men. Because women have often historically been placed at a disadvantage, being fair can involve taking temporary measures to level the playing field for all genders. Equity, therefore, is the means we use to achieve equality.	Source

Gender equity in education	Refers to the special treatment or action taken to reverse the historical and social disadvantages that prevent female and male learners from accessing and benefiting from education on equal grounds. For example, equity measures can favour girls in order to empower them and help them overcome disadvantages of chronic discrimination and catch up with boys. Equity measures, also referred to as 'positive discrimination' or 'affirmative action', do not necessarily mean that everyone receives the same treatment, but are implemented to ensure fairness and equality of outcomes. For example, providing scholarships or stipends for girls is considered as an incentive for increasing their access to education.	Source
Gender gap	In the context of economic inequality, gender gap refers to the systemic differences in the social and economic roles and wages of women and men. There is a debate about how much of this is the result of gender differences, lifestyle choices, or discrimination.	Source
Gender inequality	Refers to the legal, social and cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles.	Source
Gender stereotypes	Refers to ascribing certain attributes, characteristics and roles to people based on their gender. Gender stereotypes can be negative (i.e., women are bad drivers, men can't change diapers) and benign (i.e., women are better caregivers, men are stronger). Gender stereotyping becomes harmful when it limits a person's life choices, such as training and professional path, and life plans. Compounded gender stereotypes occur when layered with stereotypes about other characteristics of the person, such as disability, ethnicity or social status.	Source
Gender-based violence	Refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. It can include sexual, physical, mental and economic harm inflicted in public or in private. It also includes threats of violence, coercion and manipulation. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation and so-called 'honour crimes'.	Source Source
Gender-responsive	Refers to activities that are gender sensitive and that articulate policies and initiatives which address the different needs, aspirations, capacities and contributions of women and men.	Source
Gender-sensitive	Refers to activities that acknowledge differences and inequalities between women and men as requiring attention.	Source
Gender-transformative	Refers to policies and initiatives that challenge the root causes of existing and biased/discriminatory policies, practices, programmes and affect change for the betterment of life for all.	Source
Gender-transformative approaches	Refers to programmes and interventions that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women in communities, and address power imbalances between persons of different genders.	Source
Gender wage gap	Is defined as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men.	Source

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)	The main measure of a country's national economic output. It is the total value of all final goods and services produced in a particular economy	Source
Hours worked	Defined as the total number of hours actually worked per year divided by the average number of people in employment per year. Actual hours worked include regular work hours of full-time, part-time and part-year workers, paid and unpaid overtime, hours worked in additional jobs, and exclude time not worked because of public holidays, annual paid leave, own illness, injury and temporary disability, maternity leave, parental leave, schooling or training, slack work for technical or economic reasons, strike or labour dispute, bad weather, compensation leave and other reasons.	Source
Informal employment	Refers to working arrangements that, either by practice or by law, are not covered by national labour legislation, income taxation, social protection, or other employment guarantees	Source
Labour force	Refers to the sum of all persons of working age who are employed and those who are unemployed.	Source
Labour force participation rate	Is the ratio between the total labour force divided by the total working-age population. The working age population refers to people aged 15 to 65.	Source
LGBTQIA+	LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.	Source
Long term unemployment rate	Refers to persons unemployed for one year or longer as a percentage of the labour force.	Source
Low pay work rate	The low pay rate is an indicator of earnings distribution and refers to the number of employees whose hourly earnings at all jobs were less than two-thirds of the median hourly earnings, calculated as a percentage. There is no international definition for low pay.	Source
NEET	Represents the share of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), as a percentage of the total number of young people in the corresponding age group, by gender.	Source
Occupational sex segregation	Refers to a situation in which women and men are concentrated in different types of jobs and at different levels of activity and employment, with women being confined to a narrower range of occupations (horizontal segregation) than men, and to the lower grades of work (vertical segregation).	Source
Patriarchy	Refers to a traditional form of organizing society that often lies at the root of gender inequality. According to this kind of social system, men, or what is considered masculine, is accorded more importance than women, or what is considered feminine. Traditionally, societies have been organized in such a way that property, residence, and descent, as well as decision-making regarding most areas of life, have been the domain of men. This is often based on appeals to biological reasoning (that women are more 'naturally' suited to be caregivers, for example).	Source
Part-time work	Refers to a type of work where normal hours of work are less than those of comparable full-time workers.	Source

Peacebuilding	The UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee has described peacebuilding as: 'A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives' (UN PBSO, 2010: 5).	Source
Prevention	Refers to the activities that are undertaken to avoid the adverse impact of disasters, including through physical risk reduction and environmental protection. This concept encompasses mitigation	Source
Resilience	Resilience is the ability to plan and prepare for, absorb, withstand, recover from and adapt to adverse events and disruptions'. (It) 'means working to thrive through adversity rather than survive despite adversity by learning how to identify and capitalise upon any opportunities that crises, disruptions and longer-term evolutions may offer'.	Source
Sex	Refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish women and men	Source
Social protection	Refers to a country's system of benefits for people and families when they are poor, sick, disabled, out of work, elderly or young and dependent on others. The benefits may be provided by the state's social security system, through private insurance, through personal savings, through various social customs and relief organizations, or through some combination of these sources.	Source
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, refer to the set of 17 goals adopted in September 2015 by the Member States of the United Nations to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. These goals succeed the Millennium Development Goals. Sustainable Sustainable Development Goal 5 focuses on girls' and women's empowerment and gender equality.	Source
Temporary employment	Temporary employment, whereby workers are engaged only for a specific period of time, includes fixed-term, project- or task-based contracts, as well as seasonal or casual work, including day labour.	Source
Undremployment	relates to the number of employed persons whose hours of work in the reference period are insufficient in relation to a more desirable employment situation in which the person is willing and available to engage.	Source
Unemployment rate	The unemployed are people of working age who are without work, are available for work, and have taken specific steps to find work, it is measured as the number of unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force.	Source
Unpaid care and domestic work	Refers to non-market, unpaid work carried out in households (by women primarily, but also to varying degrees by girls, men and boys) which includes both direct care (of persons) and indirect care (such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and fuel, etc.) These activities are recognised as work, but typically not included in the System of National Accounts or – in the case of activities like fetching water/fuel – are theoretically included but often not well documented or accounted for	Source

Violence against women	Refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private lif	Source
Vulnerability	Refers to the characteristics and circumstances of a community, society, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard or conflict. Vulnerability may derive from various physical, social, economic or environmental factors	Source
Working age population	The working age population is defined as those aged 15 to 64.	Source

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immuno deficiency syndrome- is human immunodeficiency syndrome, a series of diseases caused by the human immunodeficiency virus or HIV.
CEDAW	the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality, an European agency
EU	The European Union.
ILO	The International Labour Organization, a United Nations agency.
ISCED	Refers to international classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. designed UNESCO to serve as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting comparable indicators and statistics of education, both within countries and internationally.
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme.
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO regions	All members of UNESCO are organized into seven regions : • Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) • Northern Africa and Western Asia (NA&WA) • Central and Southern Asia (C&SA) • Eastern and South-eastern Asia (E&SEA) • Oceania • Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) • Europe and Northern America (E&NA)
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy is an expert-driven survey on key measures of democratic features
WB	The World Bank.

Fostering women's leadership

Gender-based resilience

This report, part of UNESCO's Gender-Based Resilience Series, examines how gender inequalities across policymaking, the labour market, and innovation affect societies' full potential. It highlights the importance of women's representation in leadership, the workforce and innovation to enhance societal resilience. The report stresses the relevance of setting international targets, such as the Beijing Declaration's goal of 30% of women in decision-making and the G20 Brisbane target of a 25% reduction in labour market participation gap, to help advance accountability and progress. By adopting gender-transformative policies and promoting diversity in decision-making, the labour force, and high-tech sectors, stakeholders can accelerate progress toward more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable societies.

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